Cricket Third one-day international: Zimbabwe v England

Sitting ducks for Chicken George

Simon Mann in Harare

AFTER one of the most embarrassing defeats in England's history last week, the players must dearly wish they could return home, bolt the door, draw the curtains, turn on the heating and lie doggo until May, or maybe September when the Australians will have gone. Instead they fly to New Zealand for the second leg of their winter tour.

They will hope at least to leave some bitter memories behind them here in Harare. Eddo Brandes bowled superbly to take five for 28, including the second hat-trick of his career, but the tourists' batsmen simply lacked tenacity on a pitch Zimbabwe had used to build their highest one-day score against England.

Before the match, with Mike Atherton's men hoping to salvage a little pride and end the one-day series 2-1, the coach David Lloyd had said that playing for England should be like fighting in the trenches. It is. And the players have shell-shock.

In real life, Brandes farms chickens — hence his "Chicken George" nickname — but here he dealt in ducks. Having had Nick Knight caught down the leg side from the final ball of his second over, he completed the hat-trick in his next by having John Crawley lbw first ball and then producing what he dubbed a "magnificent jaffa" [unplayable ball] to account for Nasser Hussain. Andy Flower's diving catch was just as good as the delivery.



The jaffa . . . Brandes celebrates his hat-tick as Hussein is given out PHOTOGRAPH STU FORSTER

Alec Stewart along with Atherton hinted at a recovery but there was no respite as Zimbabwe's captain Alistair Campbell kept Brandes going. In his eighth over Stewart gave the wicketkeeper Flower the third of his five catches; in his ninth the umpire Ian Robinson adjudged that Atherton had edged a delivery that had turned him round.

It did not look an awful decision but Atherton waited, then stared at the umpire before dragging himself from the crease. Perhaps he was unhappy with the umpire's verdict; perhaps it was his way of saying "You detect our nicks but not theirs"; either way, he was out and England were doomed.

In Zimbabwe's innings Campbell had been given not out by Robinson when he had scored eight, despite clearly deflecting a catch to Stewart off the inside edge. He went on to make an unbeaten 80.

Robinson rates himself as one of three top umpires in the world, and that does not mean he thinks he is the third best. If his estimation is correct, then international umpiring is in crisis.

A ninth-wicket stand of 41 between Robert Croft and Alan Mullally ensured that England avoided their heaviest one-day defeat batting second (by 165 runs, against West Indies, St Vincent 1994) and their lowest one-day total (93, against Australia, Headingley 1975). But by then the game had taken on an unreal feel.

It is not the first time that Brandes has bowled Zimbabwe to victory over England. He took four for 21 when they triumphed at Albury in the countries' very first meeting, during the 1992 World Cup in Australia.

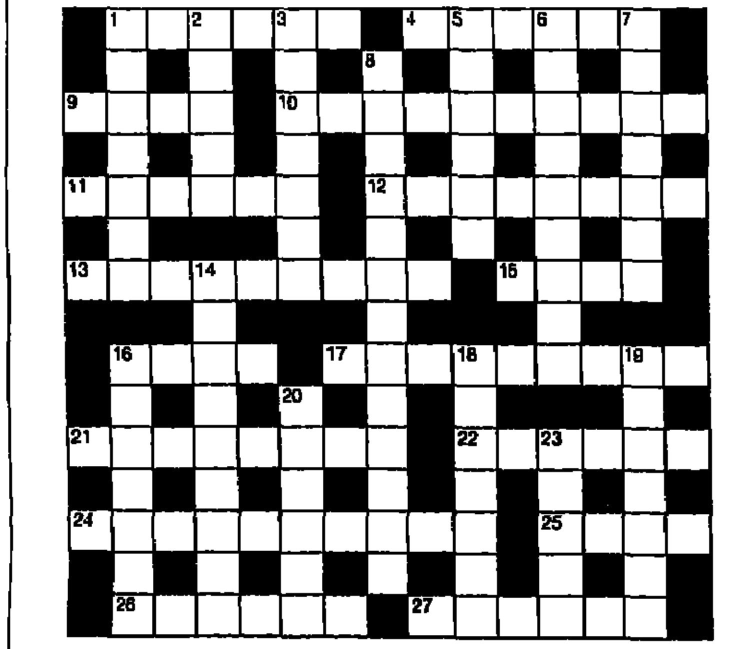
There were early signs that England were heading for another humiliation. Even Grant Flower was scoring briskly and there was no zip to England's play despite a Lloyd warning that he would not accept another off-day.

Zimbabwe had reached 181 for two by the 38th over before England managed to exert any pressure. Three wickets fell for nine runs in 16 balls but Houghton, Strang and Campbell all cleared the rope in the closing overs to consolidate the earlier good work. On a good-ish pitch they could not possibly have realised that 249 for seven would be wasted on England.

The chairman of the new England and Wales Cricket Board, Lord MacLaurin, has been watching events in Zimbabwe. In his vision for the future he sees the England team as the *creme de la creme*. This lot, however, have been out in the sun too long and have gone sour.

Scores: Zimbabwe 249 for 7; England 118.

Cryptic crossword by Rufus



Across

1 Call in church to fall on one's knees (6)
4 Makes headlines? (6)
9 It turns on an opponent (4)
10 Former astronaut going beyond the limits (10)
11 Bottle opener should be purchased (6)
12 Balls — those that go on till morning? (4,4)
13 Crack up, strangely enough (5,4)
15 Sacking worn on the foot (4)
16 Cold, with sore throat (4)
17 Without a bit of control, presumably (9)
21 Use a stop over, a humble dwelling (8)
22 Undoubtedly the trendy thing to do (6)
24 Study discipline in a moral sense (10)
25 A preposition — one not out of order (4)
26 It may be of untold value (6)
27 Illicitly acquired bundle of pound notes (6)

Down

1 Sort of map to study on a journey (7)
2 It may make a topping sweet (5)
3 Hailed or shed drops of water (7)
5 Joke too blue, perhaps (6)
6 Guard what one says — it's a good maxim (9)
7 It is a blemish on the most radiant of faces (7)
8 A blow in the back (9,4)
14 Account includes a single wrong number (9)
16 Knocked out, so no cup tickets required (7)
18 Train me to change gear (7)
19 Footballers always overweight (7)
20 Type of plant that can grow very high (6)
23 Boring bit of exercise (5)

Last week's solution

MAMMOTH STABBED
O A N A O S U I
OUTNUMBER TERMS
R I S E A R U H
EASY CAMPAIGNER
S P S E N D A
CEDRIC TAGGING
O O H E
SCOFFER EUNICE
U A L P B T U
PARTICULAR BROW
P S G S R V R A
LEMMA AGREEMENT
E A T C E R N E
RANKEST LOBSTER

Tennis Qatar Open

Henman given a final lesson

David Irvine in Doha

CREATING and seizing opportunities, as Tim Henman was forcefully reminded in his first ATP Tour final appearance at the Qatar Open in Doha last Sunday, can be two very different things.

Although Henman matched, often outplayed, the former world No 1 Jim Courier for two sets, the American's greater experience eventually told as he produced an almost flawless third to overhaul the British champion and win 7-5, 6-7, 6-2.

Henman's consolation, as he headed off to Australia, was a cheque for $59,600 and enough computer points to lift him from 29th to 24th place — the 22-year-old's highest yet — when the new world rankings were announced on Monday.

With every chance of improving on his 1996 finishes at Sydney and Melbourne, he should return home early next month as the first British man to break into the top 20 since Buster Mottram.

A year ago, as a prospective qualifier ranked 99th, Henman failed to make the main draw in Doha, and though he will be disappointed at the way things went in his first final he is now regarded by his peers as a legitimate candidate for honours. "If someone had told me 12 months ago that I would be playing the final here I would have thought them mad," he said.

Yet he will know that if he is to step into the winners' ring he must show far greater consistency than he did. His performance was too often flawed by an erratic serve, though a swirling wind proved difficult to master, and by unforced forehand errors. And he showed a marked reluctance to follow his now much stronger serve to the net.

Yet he did surpass two former French Open champions, Sergi Bruguera and the top seed Thomas Muster, in taking a set off the American. Though Courier is still some way short of his 1992 form, when he won the Australian and French Open, he is playing with more purpose and hunger than for at least two years.

For Courier, victory meant a 20th title from 32 finals; and his first since the US Indoor Championship last February. It was an evident relief. Before the match he had acknowledged that he expected "a tough time" from Henman, with whom he had practised last week.

"On the positive side, I am playing better and better. It's given me lots of confidence for the Australian Open," Henman said.

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The **Guardian Weekly**

Vol 156, No 3
Week ending January 19, 1997

Fight is on to finish Balkans business

Julian Borger in Sofia

AFTER opposition demonstrators stormed through the doors of Bulgaria's parliament on Friday last week, a slogan circulated for a while claiming: "The Serbs took 50 days. We did it in five hours."

It may have been an over-optimistic rallying cry, for both the Belgrade and Sofia governments appear to have some fight left in them. But the feeling on the streets of both capitals is unmistakable. The crowds sense they are taking part in a final push to rid eastern Europe of its last hardline former communist regimes.

The Bulgarian protests appear to have been inspired by the Serbian example. As one opposition activist put it: "There was a feeling that if the Serbs could do it, we could do it." And the protest organisers in Sofia have followed the Belgrade model: daily marches and rallies at fixed times, rather than the ill-disciplined sit-ins of earlier Bulgarian protests.

Bulgaria's opposition Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) has been particularly anxious to play up the parallels between the two protests, because the visual similarities obscure an embarrassing difference: the ruling Socialists in Bulgaria have the law on their side.

While President Slobodan Milosevic's regime in Serbia blatantly rigged the local elections in November, the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) was democratically elected and still has two more years of its mandate to run.

Bulgaria's parliamentary system functions. There have been no serious complaints about conduct in the elections in recent years, and the UDF spent most of 1992 in office, although it failed to make much of the opportunity.

State radio and television in Bulgaria are models of even-handedness compared with their Serbian counterparts, which Mr Milosevic has emasculated into mouthpieces.

In Bulgaria, the demonstrators are motivated by economic considerations and the opposition hopes to use the protests as a lever to oust the Socialists in mid-term.

The political crisis in Bulgaria was triggered by a comprehensive economic collapse. An agreement to restructure the economy broke down late last year, triggering a collapse in the value of the national currency, the lev, and a surge in inflation (310 per cent in 1996).

Krassen Stanchev, the head of Bulgaria's Institute for Market Economics, said: "The Serbian Socialists have violated the constitution. Here the UDF are trying to find ways of going around the constitution to get rid of their Socialists."

In that respect, the Bulgarian Socialists have given their opponents a helping hand, by unleashing a brutal police charge on the demonstrators last Saturday, in apparent retaliation for the storming of parliament. The assault added momentum to the demonstrations by providing its first martyrs, 170 demonstrators with bandaged heads who now help lead the marches.

Despite the different legal status of the Bulgarian and Serbian Socialist regimes, many Balkan analysts argue that the revolts against them share common roots, and that they both aim at completing unfinished revolutions.

Ivan Hrastev, a political scientist and UDF adviser, describes the fall of old-style communism in Serbia and Bulgaria as stage-managed: "In both countries, the regime controlled the transition. The shifting of power was carried out behind a party wall," he said.

In Serbia, Mr Milosevic hijacked the Communist Party in 1987, changed its name to Socialist, and transformed the ideology to fervent nationalism, while retaining the style, methods and most of the *nomenklatura* of the old regime. Popular protests in favour of a more fundamental transformation were crushed with tanks and water cannons in March 1991, and most of the radical youth either left the country or were despatched to the front in the Balkan wars that the regime helped to foment.

In Bulgaria, the communist dictator, Todor Zhivkov, was toppled in a palace coup in 1989, and the renamed Socialists, marketing themselves as reformers, won elections in 1990. A year later, however, unlike the Serbian opposition, the UDF finally had its chance in government, and — according to most commentators — wasted it.

Philip Harmandjiev, editor of the Sofia financial newspaper Kapital, said the UDF, instead of embarking on a radical transformation of the economy through privatisation, focused on the restitution of pre-war property nationalised by the communists, as a means of satisfying its core middle-class supporters.

"With that kind of restitution you are only creating a very narrow kind of electorate, and you leave the economic structure unchanged," Mr Harmandjiev said.

Within a year, the UDF gambled on a vote of no-confidence and lost, paving the way for a *nomenklatura*-backed "government of experts", which preceded the Socialist regime.

Whether through opposition incompetence or exploitation of nationalism, Bulgaria and Serbia have ended up with similar economies. Most industry is in state hands, and those businesses that appear to be privately owned often belong to cronies of the party leaderships, who use government contacts to syphon off state assets.

Many of the economic cartels in both countries share a pronounced criminal element, for they built their wealth on exploiting the holes in the four-year international embargo on former Yugoslavia.

The attempt to maintain these hybrid mafia-dominated economies has predictably ended in disaster. The catastrophe has been far more profound in Bulgaria, where average wages ($26 a month) are one-tenth of Serbian salaries.

Although the spark for the demonstrations has been different in the two Balkan states, the fuel has been remarkably similar: economic desperation and a bleak lack of prospects under regimes which have used the smokescreen of transition to line their pockets.

A protester bleeds after being beaten by police in Sofia last week. Bulgaria's ruling party appeared to capitulate this week to street protests and strike threats, agreeing "in principle" to hold fresh elections and implement economic reform PHOTO: DIMITAR DILKOFF

Alive – after four days in a watery tomb

Luke Harding, and Christopher Zinn in Sydney

IT WAS, he said, like heaven. Four days after his yacht capsized in the icy vastness of the Southern Ocean, Tony Bullimore could savour the joys of rescue.

The round-the-world yachtsman was plucked from the sea at 1am on Thursday last week by an Australian frigate after an ordeal worthy of the explorer Scott.

If he had never existed, Boy's Own would have had to invent him. He had spent four days entombed in the upturned hull of his yacht in one of the world's most treacherous seas. Cowering in pitch darkness in a makeshift hammock, he survived through sheer determination and nibbles of chocolate.

Mr Bullimore, whose boat capsized in mountainous waves 1,500km from Antarctica and 2,130km off the Australian coast, admitted he had almost given up hope when a diver banged on the side of his boat.

"When I saw the ship standing there and the plane going overhead and a couple of guys peering over the top of the upturned hull, it was heaven, absolute heaven."

Mr Bullimore, aged 57, was forced to sit and wait after his yacht, the Global Exide Challenger, lost its keel and capsized on January 12. A huge recovery operation, hampered by atrocious weather conditions, raced against time to rescue him.

Mr Bullimore, who had been competing in the Vendee Globe round-the-world race when disaster struck, said two-thirds of the hull filled with water after he capsized. "I had to find myself a spot as high up as possible and put nets around it so that I could crawl in there and lash myself in to get out of the water."

Wearing a suit designed to keep a sailor alive for two hours in a sea temperature of 5C, he had stretched this to more than 80 hours by avoiding wind chill under the hull and keeping himself as dry as possible.

The French sailor Thierry Dubois, whose yacht also capsized last Sunday, was winched to safety from a life raft two hours before Mr Bullimore.

Mr Dubois said he had been certain of dying but had clung to life because he had not seen enough of it. "I really tried to hang in there. I'm only 29 and I felt it was a pity to call it a day without having seen much of life."

The rescue by the Australian Navy and Air Force raised questions over the cost, estimated at hundreds of thousands of dollars.

But Australia's defence minister dismissed the criticism. Ian McLachlan said the experience gained was something money could not buy. Australia has, however, called for restrictions on the routes of global yacht races.

On Monday Mr Bullimore defied doctors' orders, and walked down the gangplank of the Australian navy frigate that saved him to a hero's welcome at Fremantle. Thousands turned out on land and sea to greet HMAS Adelaide and the two sailors.

Mr Bullimore lost his left little finger when he was tossed around at sea, and has a badly frostbitten left index finger. He is also suffering from trench foot, but doctors hope that he will not lose another finger or any toes.

Comment, page 12

Austria	AS30	Malta	50c
Belgium	BF75	Netherlands	G 4.76
Denmark	DK16	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 460	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.30

Britain must end its continental drift

PREDICTABLY the remarks of Klaus Kinkel, the German foreign minister, have riled the Tory Eurosceptics (Outrage at German 'meddling', January 12). Furthermore his intervention can and will be misrepresented as unwarranted interference in domestic British politics.

But he speaks the uncomfortable truth. For the British government's current policies affect the whole of the European Union, not only the UK. At the Inter-Government Conference, time and again, Britain has blocked virtually every significant proposal, threatening to veto decisions on which all the other countries are agreed. It is not a position that can be sustained.

So, within a matter of months, Britain will have to choose whether to be a constructive partner in the EU (which doesn't mean agreeing to everything, but, rather, fighting for the best possible outcomes) or whether to isolate herself, not just from Europe, but from significant influence in the 21st century world.

Neither the US nor the major powers of Asia, Latin America and Africa would take seriously a Britain divorced from the continent of which she is historically a part.
Baroness Shirley Williams,
House of Lords, London

OUR party leaders should have welcomed British interest being solicited by major leaders on the Continent after this country's record of nursery-style petulance towards the rest of Europe last year.

What is more natural, within the ever-closer union to which we are committed, than to encourage each other's governments and electors to think meaningfully about our common affairs? To be taken seriously is a sign of respect and friendship, not intrusion.
Raymond le Goy,
Harbledown, Canterbury

WHY the fuss over Klaus Kinkel? A person who lost the leadership of his own party and only remains in the Kohl cabinet to keep the highly unpopular Free Democratic Party in the coalition.
David England,
Southport

I SEE that the Health Secretary, Stephen Dorrell, is now making speeches about Europe (The week in Britain, January 12). Is this because:

❑ Mr Dorrell is bored with running the NHS, particularly since it is now facing its most difficult winter in years;
❑ Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Howard are incapable of providing a coherent explanation of Government policy in their areas of responsibility;
❑ Chairman Mawhinney, Deputy PM Heseltine and John Major himself don't have the firepower between them to communicate Government views across the range of policy issues;
❑ Everything Mr Dorrell does is designed to position himself for the coming Tory leadership election — one contest Mr Dorrell thinks a Conservative could win;
❑ All of the above?

Alan Leaman,
Liberal Democrat Parliamentary spokesman, Mid-Dorset and North Poole, Corfe Mullen, Dorset

Don't write off the Zapatistas

IN HIS comment on Latin American revolutionaries (No Future for Rebels Trapped in the Past, January 5) Richard Gott cites the Zapatistas rebels in Chiapas, Mexico, as an example of his stereotype of ineffective leftish rebellion. But last summer's conference in Chiapas, hosted by the Zapatistas and attended by several thousand people from more than 40 nations (and with plans for another such encounter to be held in Europe), demonstrates that the Zapatistas are a broadening political force. They have international influence and a non-aligned political stance: they are not, as Mr Gott describes, a "localised guerrilla movement, on Mexico's border with Guatemala [which] failed to ignite much activity elsewhere".

One wonders if the presence of an established popular movement in Chiapas may have increased the Guatemalan government's recent willingness to make unprecedented compromises towards peace there. The Zapatistas have made great progress in working with the Mexican government in drafting the indigenous Rights and Culture Agreement, which has popular and Congressional support. Once it is signed by the balking Mexican president, Ernesto Zedillo, it will protect the basic human and civil rights of indigenous Mexicans, under national law. This is not the work of isolated extremists. To dismiss the Zapatista as such is folly.
Roberta Casey,
Australian Co-ordinator, Indigenous Rights Network, Longueville, NSW, Australia

Art in an angry frame of mind

THE disappearance by theft or otherwise of large numbers of paintings by famous artists will be regretted by tiny proportion of the world's population (Works of art up for grabs, December 22).

Having worked in many countries and experienced several cultures, I have never, ever felt that my inability to see, touch, hold, fondle or otherwise lust over a canvas by any artist (sic) hindered my ability to live a full and productive life.

I once viewed a Picasso exhibition held in the Palais des Papes in Avignon. Some of the pictures were quite pretty but on the whole they were nonsensical rubbish. As for the products of the likes of David Hockney and Andy Warhol, I have always assumed, along with everyone else, that their attempts at art were the product of a highly developed sense of humour coupled with a strong desire for money and adulation.

Does anyone really think that any of these works have added one iota of benefit to the well-being of the huge numbers of people in the world who are poor, persecuted, starving, ignorant and otherwise disadvantaged?

Without wishing to condone any unlawful activity I would be quite unconcerned if some of the more egregious examples of such "art" were to be permanently removed from circulation and if an enterprising individual wanted to start a new career in the art liberation realm, well . . . there's a painting in the Canadian National Gallery in Ottawa entitled, Voice Of Fire, which consists of a painted black stripe, a red stripe and another black stripe (or maybe it's the other way around). You can't miss it; it's the painting surrounded by the weeping Canadian taxpayer.
Justin ME Martin,
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Prince on a sticky wicket

THE Duke of Edinburgh has raised all kind of possibilities with his proposition (The week in Britain, January 5). A new form of game hunting might be devised in which the aim is to knock a pheasant out of the air with a treble-sprung piece of polished willow, or even a squash racket.

By the same token, the English cricket team could be given hand guns which might be more effective against the fast bowling of the West Indies than the out-moded wooden bat. The Duke is absolutely right: we have failed to recognise the intrinsic similarity of cricket bats and guns, and have become far too hidebound.
Gavin Weightman,
London

WITH reference to the Duke of Edinburgh's recent comment, can we now expect to read reports of the Duke hunting pheasant armed with a cricket bat?
A Simons
Camp Hill, Queensland, Australia

THREE cheers for Prince Philip. His frequent utterances can only hasten the much-hoped-for demise of this ridiculous monarchy and all the paraphernalia that attends it.
Paul Kenton,
Derby

HAS anyone ever managed to kill a wild stag with a cricket bat?
Brian Reilly,
Department of Clinical Engineering, Withington Hospital, Manchester

Mixing cons and icons

RE THE paperbacks review by Nicholas Lezard (January 12). I am not over familiar with Madame Blavatsky or Krishnamurti but I am sure readers would have found the allusion to Gurdjieff somewhat curious. Quite a few British icons are either followers or sympathisers of Gurdjieff's ideas — Peter Brooke, John Cleese and Warren Mitchell to name but a few. The American writer Kathryn Hulme also springs to mind, as does Katherine Mansfield. In the 1930s, A R Orage, editor of the New Age, was one of Gurdjieff's closest pupils. Orage was described by T S Eliot as the "best leader writer and finest literary critic of his day".

Gurdjieff was a classic exponent of what he called "genuine objective science", and his work could easily be described as a forerunner of Lovelock's writings on Gaia. As we approach the end of this millennium with governments the world over lumbering from one crisis to another, to say nothing of ecological problems, economic and social crisis, Gurdjieff's ideas are arguably more pertinent than ever before.
Michael Kenneth Cowan,
Crystal Waters, Australia

Briefly

IN ITS drive towards free trade, the World Trade Organisation has targeted the informed consumer as one of the main obstacles (Goods for some are bad for others, December 15). The logical outcome of the WTO's principles is that our shops in the future will be stocked with products labelled in such a way as to conceal both their country of origin and the substances they contain. The only solace is that the WTO will also have to ban all brand-name logos, labels and advertising, in case these, too, lead to discrimination.
Michael Fitzgerald,
Jambi, Indonesia

IN THE illuminating essay by Glenn Frankel (Nigeria's rulers mix oil and money, December 29) he writes: "Gen Sani Abacha became the latest of a long line of Nigerian military masters in 1993 when he annulled the presidential election . . ." The fact is that Gen Abacha did not annul the 1993 presidential election. The then head of state Gen Ibrahim Babangida did, bringing Nigeria to the brink of economic, political and social collapse.
Ugonna Wachuku,
Geneva, Switzerland

THE reaction to the tragedy at Dunblane with the shooting of 16 children and their teacher was so strong that Parliament has taken steps to reduce the number of firearms in the UK. And rightly so. Yet, in Rwanda many more children have been killed, maimed or orphaned. The reaction to this is minimal. The tragedy of these children evokes momentary pity. But nothing strong enough to reduce the number of firearms in Rwanda.
J R Macey,
Fort Myers, Florida, USA

IF JACK Straw's criticism of hereditary peers (Straw lays into hereditary peers, January 12) had concentrated more on the logical flaws of the institution rather than on its history or the failing of individual peers, his attack might have carried more weight. The philosopher Thomas Paine pointed out that the first-born legislators had achieved their position by "trampling on all their younger brothers and sisters" — a poor qualification for making just laws.
Harry Davis,
Thames Ditton, Surrey

"*TORIES* caught cheating in crucial vote" (January 5) is just another example of how desperate the Conservative government is to hang on to power. What young democracies make of these actions, one dreads to think.
Malcolm J Bell,
Neath, West Glamorgan

The Guardian Weekly

January 19, 1997 Vol 156 No 3

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
Letters to the Editor and other editorial correspondence to: The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ.
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Gun control . . . Palestinian girls walk past armed Israeli police in Jerusalem's old city on their way to al-Aqsa mosque on the first day of Ramadan last week PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME DELAY

Israel split threatens West Bank deal

Ian Black in Tel Aviv

ISRAEL'S prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, was facing strong and possibly terminal opposition from his government on Monday as negotiators — interrupted by a bomb threat — put the finishing touches to an elusive deal with the Palestinians over new withdrawals from the West Bank.

Only hours after dramatic intervention by King Hussein of Jordan produced a compromise agreement linking a long-delayed pullout from Hebron to three more pullbacks — and appeared to put the faltering peace process back on track — the Likud leader's ministerial colleagues were more divided than ever.

As rightwing settlers threatened mass hunger strikes, demonstrations and other forms of direct action, analysts calculated that Mr Netanyahu now has only the slimmest of majorities for the controversial agreement.

Of his 18-member cabinet, eight coalition ministers are for the deal and seven against but three waverers could tip the balance — even though the prime minister has an extra, casting vote.

If the vote is eight in favour and 10 against, Mr Netanyahu — and the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestinians — will be in deep trouble.

This mounting nervousness reflects the fact that if both Hebron and the subsequent pullbacks go ahead, Likud and its political allies will face a moment of truth regarding their commitment to a "Greater Israel".

Ironically, Mr Netanyahu could be in a minority in cabinet yet still enjoy wide support in the 120-member Knesset (parliament) where Labour and other opposition parties are urging him to follow the late Yitzhak Rabin and stick to the Oslo process.

Two ministers from the National Religious Party said they might vote against the prime minister over a move which they said could mean abandoning both territory and principles.

In the heat of the debate, however, few remember that even with dates for the withdrawals, now due to end by late August 1998, there is crucially no prior agreement on their extent — undermining Mr Netanyahu's argument that Israel is surrendering its irreplaceable territorial cards before talks on final status issues such as settlement, sovereignty and Jerusalem.

Yet as the domestic political temperature rose, negotiators again failed to close the Hebron deal. Israeli officials complained that the Palestinian side was re-opening extraneous issues at the last minute.

● At least 13 people were injured — two seriously — by bomb attacks in central Tel Aviv last week in an incident attributed to Palestinian extremists trying to undermine the peace process.

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Washington Post, page 15

Turkey war threat over Cyprus arms

Helena Smith in Nicosia and James Meek in Moscow

WESTERN diplomats are increasingly concerned that Turkey is contemplating a decisive break with the West and that the supreme expression of its disaffection could be war with Greece over Cyprus, a nightmare scenario which would pitch two members of Nato against each other.

But Cyprus has played down talk by Washington of an imminent breakthrough in a military dialogue to reduce tension along the ceasefire line dividing the island's Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities.

On Monday American envoy Carey Cavanaugh and State Department spokesman Nicolas Burns announced in Cyprus and Washington respectively that an agreement was close.

But on Tuesday the Cypriot government spokesman Yiannakis Cassoulides denied the two sides were on the brink of signing an agreement. "We are still talking about it," he said.

Mr Cassoulides added: "President [Glafcos] Clerides has reiterated to Mr Cavanaugh his intention to intervene in the military dialogue with our own military people and see what is happening with the dialogue and try to help it to advance. Thats all."

Many American diplomats believe that Turkey, driven by a nationalist Islamic government, is a "loose cannon". Ankara, playing an enfeebled Russia off against Western powers by which it feels rebuffed, may be ready to resume a dominant role in the region.

The Greeks, dismissing Turkey's war-like noises as "a cultivated climate of crisis", are refusing to budge from their support for Nicosia's plans to deploy, in about 18 months, sophisticated S-300 anti-aircraft missiles from Russia.

By the end of last week Turkey's angry denunciations had turned into an explicit threat of military action. Tansu Ciller, the Turkish Foreign Minister, said "we will do what is needed". She added: "If that means they need to be hit, they will be hit."

Ms Ciller was due to visit northern Cyprus this week to discuss plans for a naval and air base to counter Greek forces in the south.

The Greek Cypriots are extending a civilian airfield at Paphos international airport on the west of the island for F-16 fighters from Greece. President Clerides's government has also announced plans for a naval base in the framework of Cyprus's recently activated common defence agreement with Greece. Athens announced last weekend that Costas Elidas, the Greek Cypriot Defence Minister, would visit the Greek capital for talks with his hardline Greek counterpart, Akis Tsochadzopoulos.

Cyprus has about 10,000 troops on the island, plus Greek military advisers, against the 30,000 Turkish forces in the breakaway north of the island. The missiles, together with Greece's expanded arms budget and Nicosia's recent acquisition of about 40 Russian T-80 tanks, will disturb the balance of power in which Turkey holds air superiority.

The S-300, a kind of "super-Patriot" missile, has a range of about 150km but has never been fired outside Russia. Nicosia insists its deployment will be purely defensive.

The hopeful analysis is that Turkey may be trying to force the international community to attach greater urgency to the search for a permanent solution to the Cyprus problem.

Turkey wants a confederal arrangement in which the two zones have equal status. Greek Cypriots have also agreed to a bi-zonal federation, but the two sides in Cyprus have, since Turkish troops invaded the island in 1974, been unable to work out the details of such an arrangement.

Peru hostage hopes crumble

Joseph Frazier in Lima

HOPES for the first real progress in weeks in Peru's hostage crisis crumbled when the guerrillas demanded that the government produce a plan to free hundreds of jailed comrades.

The Tupac Amaru guerrillas have been firm in that key demand since taking over the residence of the Japanese ambassador on December 17, and President Alberto Fujimori just as firmly says he won't give in to it.

The rebels and the government negotiator, Domingo Palermo, had tentatively agreed to meet last Sunday. But Mr Palermo said no meeting was held after the rebels, in a message sent via the Red Cross, insisted that he "bring a proposal for the liberation of the [Tupac Amaru] prisoners."

He quoted the guerrillas as saying that "otherwise it is preferable that the meeting not take place" — because there would be nothing to discuss.

Speaking at a news conference, Mr Palermo said he sent back a proposal to form a commission to help negotiate a settlement to free the 74 hostages.

The panel would be composed of representatives from the government, the rebels, the Red Cross and the Roman Catholic Church. It would agree on a place for negotiations and an agenda which would include "all themes identified in previous contacts", Mr Palermo said.

He didn't comment on whether that included the freeing of rebel prisoners.

On Monday the rebels placed a sign in a window of the residence asking for an interview with a local television station to respond to Mr Palermo's proposal. The station, Channel 4, said it was ready to send a news crew into the compound with the government's permission. There was no immediate response from the government. —*AP*

Washington Post, page 16

Mercenaries head for eastern Zaire

Paul Webster in Paris

HUNDREDS of mercenaries, led by French officers, are being recruited as part of a drive to retake eastern Zaire, according to reports that recall the use of hired foreign troops during earlier conflicts in the former Belgian colony, as well as Rhodesia, Biafra and elsewhere in Africa.

Military sources said the recruitment of mercenaries for a so-called White Legion — including British former members of the SAS — had intensified while Zaire's president, Mobutu Sese Seko, convalesced on the French Riviera after an operation in Switzerland.

The recruitment programme was being closely monitored, the sources in Paris said, adding that about 10 French officers were already operating in eastern Zaire with the local army.

The French newspaper Le Monde claimed two former French presidential bodyguards were playing a leading role in recruitment that could result in several hundred European soldiers being sent to the Rwandan border zone where rebel factions have routed Zaire's army.

The French government, whose defence agreement with Zaire has been suspended because of human rights abuses, denied official involvement in plans to prop up the Zairean army, which collapsed earlier this year.

But in the past — notably during Biafra's attempted secession from federal Nigeria in the 1960s — France has encouraged serving paratroopers to join active service units in Africa as mercenaries or instructors.

The recent intervention by French paratroopers to save the corrupt government in Bangui, in the Central African Republic, is a sign that the Gaullist-led government is again ready to use force to protect its interests.

The use of mercenaries is outlawed by the Organisation of African Unity. Zaire, formerly the Belgian Congo, has suffered inordinately from instability caused by mercenaries hired by secessionist groups, as in Katanga.

But President Mobutu, who returned briefly to Zaire last month in the hope of ending months of rioting and protests against his corrupt rule, can no longer depend on his soldiers — other than paratroopers trained by France and Belgium for his personal protection.

Le Monde said 200 to 300 mercenaries were already available to serve in Zaire, and hundreds more were being recruited. They include Europeans from several countries, South Africans and volunteers from Mozambique and Angola.

Recruitment was said to be in the hands of Alain Le Carro, a former police colonel who was part of François Mitterrand's personal protection unit before retiring in 1994. As head of a small security firm, he has worked with Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso leaders.

He is associated with Robert Montoya, another former Elysée gendarme, reportedly in Zaire on contract for a South African company, Executive Outcomes, which had links with white mercenaries in the Angolan civil war.

Le Monde, page 13

The Week

BABY MILK manufacturers have been accused of "systematic" breaches of the *International Code of Marketing* of Breast Milk Substitutes in a study by 27 charities, churches and other organisations. The findings were rejected by the industry's governing body.

SOME 40,000 white-collar, car and shipyard workers marched in protests in Seoul but there were few indications the strike had lived up to its billing as the biggest in South Korea's history, and it failed to bring the capital to a standstill.

Le Monde, page 13
Echoes of Britain, page 19

IN DEFIANCE of the war crimes tribunal in The Hague, the international community is ready to direct $1.5 billion of economic aid to the Bosnian Serb republic without an agreed timetable for the handover of indicted Bosnian war criminals.

SOLDIERS from Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army shot dead 126 Burundian Hutu refugees who tried to escape from a local detention centre after being expelled from Tanzania, an army spokesman said.

LEFT with a cache of highly enriched uranium from the Soviet era, Georgia officials are offering the radioactive material for sale — on condition that it is not used for military purposes.

THE Kenyan government has failed to halt widespread torture of men, women and children, which involves electric shocks and sexual abuse, Amnesty International said.

SEVEN second world war veterans became the first black soldiers of that conflict to be presented with the Congressional Medal of Honour, the highest US military award, 52 years after the event.

MOTHER TERESA, aged 86, is widely expected to step down as head of the Missionaries of Charity order because of poor health.

A MAOIST guerrilla group attacked a remote police station in southern India with explosives, killing 16 policemen and two civilian prisoners.

A COMMUTER airliner attempting to land in Detroit in poor weather plunged into a snowy field and exploded in a fireball, killing all 29 passengers and crew on board.

Washington Post, page 15

MASS murder charges have been brought against three Greeks after the government said it feared that more than 280 would-be immigrants from Asia had died in a collision at sea off Sicily on Christmas Day.

Russia floats Belarus union to block Nato

David Hearst in Moscow

UNDERLINING its determination to resist Nato's plans to expand eastwards, Russia on Monday raised the possibility of expanding westwards in a union "of some kind or another" with Belarus.

President Boris Yeltsin wrote to the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, saying the two states should consider holding a referendum on unification. This could involve a single government, currency, system of taxation and energy supply.

The letter said the union between the two former Soviet republics had become a reality, and that steps should now be taken to bring them together, according to Mr Yeltsin's spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhemsky.

Mr Lukashenko has become the West's least-loved eastern European head of state since winning a referendum that extended his powers and destroyed a united opposition in parliament. The Council of Europe, which promotes democracy and human rights, suspended Belarus's special guest status this week, saying its new legislature had no democratic legitimacy.

The unification idea, long talked about but never acted upon, is intended as a shot across Nato's bows. One of the Moscow administration's nationalists, Sergei Shakrai, was said to be behind the scheme. "Shakrai considers that the most effective answer to Nato's expansion eastwards would be real unification between Russia and Belarus," Interfax said.

The plan is music to the ears of Mr Lukashenko, who said last Sunday that he enjoyed playing younger brother to Mr Yeltsin.

Russian border guards control Belarus's western borders with Poland, and the Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, mediated in the recent constitutional conflict between Mr Lukashenko and his parliament.

Unification is popular in Belarus, especially with the depressed rural population who never considered themselves ethnically different from the Russians and refuse to speak the Belarussian language. Belarus was the workshop of the Soviet Union, and the severing of ties with Russia shattered its economy.

Moscow has resisted unification on economic grounds, fearing it would import the inflation and unemployment of the least successful post-Soviet economy in the region, where market reforms have barely started. But the Russian military would welcome reunification.

In reality, Mr Yeltsin's letter may be primarily for consumption in Brussels, and the Russian government might hate to have its bluff called. Mr Lukashenko said: "If Boris Nikolayevich [Yeltsin] is ready, you know my position: I have long been ready."

Meanwhile Nato is ready to broaden the field of future security co-operation with Russia in an effort to overcome Moscow's fears about plans to expand the alliance to states in central Europe.

Under proposals to be discussed with the Russian government next week, 16 Nato states and Russia would set up a new security council as part of the proposed Nato/Russia Atlantic Charter.

The joint council would try to find agreement on such issues as arms reductions and action to combat nuclear proliferation, and on joint security missions such as that in Bosnia. But the Russian government will be told that it will not be given a veto on key alliance policies, above all, enlargement.

When he meets the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, in Moscow next week the Nato secretary-general, Javier Solana, will underline the alliance's determination to take the first steps towards enlargement at its summit in Madrid this summer — with or without an agreement on the new security partnership.

"We are listening to Russian concerns," a senior Nato source said this week. "There is, however, no question of giving Russia — or anyone else — a veto over Nato decisions . . . If [the security agreement] needs more time to negotiate and finalise, so be it. In any event, the Nato summit will decide which countries we want to begin negotiating with about membership."

The most likely candidates to be brought into the alliance are Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Slovenia also appears to be a front-runner.

Bowing to fierce Russia objections, Nato will not include Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in the first phase of enlargement.

Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 15



Security men guard the hospital in Moscow where Boris Yeltsin is being treated for pneumonia. The president had been back at work for just two weeks after recovering from a heart operation PHOTO: ULLI MICHEL

Evidence of HK 'cover-up'

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong

IN TESTIMONY assailing the credibility of the Hong Kong government, the protagonist of the colony's biggest political scandal in years last week demolished the official version of his mysterious departure as head of the immigration department, which issues British passports.

Stonewalled for weeks by a procession of witnesses claiming amnesia, shredded documents and official secrecy, a panel of Hong Kong legislators heard dramatic new evidence that points to a cover-up by Gov Chris Patten's administration and stokes suspicion about China's access to sensitive information.

Laurence Leung, who holds an OBE and worked in the colonial civil service for 31 years, told the legislative council that he had not resigned for "personal reasons", as claimed repeatedly by the government, but had been forced to quit as immigration chief.

Mr Patten is currently in Britain. With only six months to go before China takes over Hong Kong, the saga has mesmerised the colony, where themes of intrigue, betrayal and passports have a special potency in the public imagination.

Perhaps even murkier than the administration's role is that of a senior Chinese official in the colony, Chen Zuo'er. Mr Leung caused gasps in the domed council chamber when he acknowledged holding a hasty meeting with Mr Chen in a coffee shop in Wanchai on July 5 — the afternoon he "resigned".

Mr Leung had initially told legislators that he had done "nothing in particular" that day except telephone his wife, but he quickly changed his story when a Democratic Party member of the panel, Cheung Man-kwong, revealed a telephone tip-off that Mr Leung had been seen in Wanchai with the Beijing official.

Mr Leung then said he had spent "about 10 minutes" with Mr Chen, deputy head of the Chinese delegation to the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) overseeing the transition.

Before losing his job, Mr Leung frequently attended JLG meetings on immigration issues. There has been speculation, all of it so far unsubstantiated, that he may have leaked secrets about passports or other matters to China.

Sudan rebels make gains

Victoria Engstrand in Asmara, Eritrea

THE Sudan People's Liberation Army said on Tuesday that a joint rebel force had captured key Sudanese government army garrisons at Al-Kali, Daimonsour and Shali al-Fil in the southern Blue Nile region.

Its spokesman in Eritrea, Yassir Arman, said the operation was carried out by a joint force of the umbrella opposition group, the National Democratic Alliance. "NDA forces in the southern Blue Nile area captured these strategic garrisons," Mr Arman said.

On Sunday the rebels said they had captured Kurmuk and some army garrisons in the Blue Nile province in the first big combined operation by northern and southern opponents of the Islamist-dominated government in Khartoum.

In Khartoum, an armed forces statement referred only obliquely to a rebel role, saying that Ethiopian forces were operating along with what it called "remnants of agents and mercenaries".

The Sudanese government on Monday prepared public opinion for a military campaign after the army said Ethiopian forces had attacked two border towns.

State radio and television broadcast patriotic and military songs and poetry, along with messages supporting the government and attacking what they called the Ethiopian aggression.

The radio said the Osman Digna brigade of the paramilitary People's Defence Forces was preparing to leave Khartoum to head towards the border towns of Kurmuk and Qeissan, about 600km southeast of the capital.

President Omar Hassan al-Bashir has called for "general mobilisation" against the threat but the government has not announced any specific compulsory measures.

Diplomats in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, said the upsurge in fighting in Sudan was the reason behind the cancellation of a visit to Kenya by Mr Bashir this week. Mr Bashir was to have had talks with President Daniel arap Moi but the foreign ministry said the visit had been cancelled. The ministry gave no reasons. — *Reuter*

Anti-cancer agent found in grapes

Tim Radford

GRAPES and wine contain a natural antidote to cancer, scientists reported last week, a discovery that could help explain the so-called "French paradox" — the lower rates of heart disease and cancer of nations such as France, Italy and Spain.

John Pezzuto of the Illinois College of Pharmacy in Chicago and other scientists reported in the US journal Science that they tested a plant substance called resveratrol and found it showed cancer-preventing activity in three major stages of tumour formation. They found high quantities of resveratrol in grapes and fresh grape skin, and up to three milligrams per litre in red wine. "Appreciable amounts are also found in white and rosé wines," they report.

Resveratrol acted as an antioxidant and antimutagen, blocking other cell-changing agents from starting cancer. It also acted in a number of ways to stop the promotion of cancer, and inhibited the progress of human leukaemia-cell formation. Cancer is the largest cause of death worldwide, taking one life in five.

"Resveratrol merits investigation as a potential cancer chemopreventive agent," the scientists conclude.

Nobody knows for certain what resveratrol does in plants. It has been found in at least 72 species, including mulberries, peanuts and grapes. It is thought to be one of a class called phytoalexins, produced by plants when they are stressed by fungal attack.

Wine — and red wine in particular — was already known to offer some kind of protection against heart disease. This may be because it prevents the build-up of platelets in the blood.

The latest discovery supports what herbalists and botanists say: many plants contain useful and as yet unidentified agents for the treatment and prevention of disease — including cardiovascular diseases and cancer. And it reinforces the new interest in low-fat and high-fibre diets as a way of reducing cancer risk. The US National Cancer Institute believes that diet is responsible for 35 per cent of all cancers.

But Dr Pezzuto is not, for the time being, recommending chemotherapy by the claret glass or a prophylactic pinot noir. Alcohol is dangerous in other ways. Grapes and grape juices would be a healthier choice.

"We are a bit concerned," said Dr Pezzuto. "Obviously this is related to the so-called French paradox, with wine consumption being inversely related to heart problems.

"The good news is that we have things in wine and grape products that can possibly prevent cancer. The other side of the coin is that there tends to be a positive correlation between cancer and alcohol — with breast cancer, for example. So at best what we have here is some kind of neutralising effect."

Estonia freezes out Russians

Jon Henley in Helsinki

PAVEL was born in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic 44 years ago. His parents, from Smolensk, were among the 600,000 mainly Russian immigrants who flooded in as part of Moscow's policy of "sovietising" its empire.

He went to a Russian school, where he spent only three weeks learning Estonian. He read Russian papers, watched Russian television, and worked in a Russian factory in Tallinn, where nearly half the population was, and still is, Russian. He married a Russian woman.

Now, apart from a bit of black market money-changing, Pavel is unemployed: most of the jobs he could apply for require him to speak Estonian. Nor does he have the vote, because although he has a residence permit, he has not applied for Estonian citizenship — he knows he would fail the stiff language test.

"It's wrong," he said. "This is my country, I have nothing in Russia. Estonians are nice people, but their language is very difficult and I can't afford lessons. I don't know what I am any more."

Disillusioned and often nostalgic for the certainties of Soviet days, the more than 1 million ethnic Russians living in Estonia and neighbouring Latvia are fast becoming an issue beyond both countries' borders.

Last week they received support from the Kremlin. Russia's foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, urged economic sanctions against Estonia to force it to end the alleged discrimination, adding weight to a call from the Russian lower house of parliament last year for similar measures against Latvia.

Although supportive of the Baltic states' new democracies, Western governments, too, are showing concern. Last month the US ambassador to Stockholm publicly urged Estonia and Latvia to do more to integrate people of Russian origin.

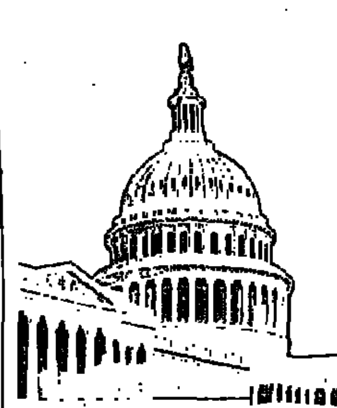
Estonia dismissed Mr Primakov's remarks as sabre-rattling designed to thwart Tallinn's hopes of becoming one of the first countries in east European to join the European Union. It points out that a fact-finding mission from Moscow last year could find no serious violations of human rights.

While basic human rights are not in question, Estonia's laws make life difficult for the one-third of its population, almost all Russian, that did not win citizenship after independence in 1989.

Applicants for citizenship and the vote must pass an exam on the laws and constitution, in Estonian. The alternative is an alien's passport.

Most observers agree that in time, as a new generation grows up speaking better Estonian, the issue should subside. In the short term, however, it is creating problems.

Progressives make their presence felt



The US this week

Martin Walker

THIS HAS been a dreadful week for American democracy, with its two political leaders each engulfed in ethical nastiness. Newt Gingrich was narrowly re-elected Speaker of the House of Representatives, with nine members of his party refusing to vote for him, and many others holding their noses. President Bill Clinton, preparing for his second inauguration, started the new political year with the Supreme Court hearing formal arguments over a sickening allegation of sexual harassment against him. But these dispiriting events were redeemed by one hopeful sign that something different is stirring in the body politic.

Dismayed by Clinton's centrism, and his readiness to embrace tax cuts and to eviscerate welfare, the Democratic left is enjoying a modest but significant revival. Last week, 52 Democratic Congressmen signed up for the year's first meeting of the Progressive Caucus, a body that claimed only five members in 1990.

"This forum will be a showcase for policies that advance the interests of all the people and promote the principles of economic justice and non-discrimination," promised Congressman Bernie Sanders, chairman of the Progressive Caucus, an independent who is the only socialist in the House. His agenda of economic populism, tax increases for the rich, Keynesian public investment and scepticism over Clinton's strategy of free trade is rallying increasing support among trade unions, minorities, public interest and environmental groups, and liberal Democrats.

"It is terribly important that a block has now emerged in Congress of people who are committed to the interests of working and low-income people, and it reflects the alarm with the shamefully low turnout of voters," Sanders said. "A lot of low-income people have given up on our democracy because their interests have been ignored. The Democratic party has moved very far to the right under Bill Clinton, and what we are seeing now is the reaction against that trend."

Sanders has been re-elected to Congress four times by the people of Vermont, who knew him first as a thoroughly decent mayor of Burlington and so are not frightened by the "socialist" label. His father was a paint salesman in Flatbush, and Sanders came to Vermont in 1968, in that wave of commune-seeking young hippies, radicals and anti-war students seeking rural alternatives. Unlike most of them, Sanders stayed. As mayor during the growth years of the 1980s, he built low-income housing and day-care centres, cleaned up Lake Champlain and shifted the revenue base from property tax to sales taxes on utilities and the thriving restaurant and hotel trade.

In his successful 1990 campaign for Congress, he was able to garner rural votes because his Republican incumbent had voted for the assault weapons ban in a state filled with hunters. "Socialists against gun control" is an unusual slogan, but this was the message that got him to Congress. Sanders has since voted for the assault weapons ban, which annoyed the National Rifle Association, but he also voted against the 1993 Brady bill to impose a five-day waiting period before a firearm could be bought.

In an interview last week, Sanders also sounded remarkably indulgent about Clinton, who many on the left distrust for his devout pursuit of free trade, and his readiness to co-operate with the Republicans in balancing the budget and saying that "the era of big government is over".

"I think Bill Clinton really tried in his first two years in office," Sanders said. "His first budget, in 1993, was reasonably progressive. His tax reform was clearly progressive, cutting the taxes on the working poor, and only the richest 4 per cent saw their taxes increased. But nobody in America knew that. The Republicans were allowed by the media to portray it as the biggest tax increase in the history of the world. When I went speaking in my own district about the budget, people would tell me they didn't know the reality. I told President Clinton about this, and he just said yeah, he knew it, and they just couldn't get the news out. And then on health reform, when Clinton did the right thing, the media just ripped the shit out of him."

Sanders identified four big issues for the Progressive Caucus to develop. The first is the continuing crisis of affordable healthcare. The second is the sharp and widening disparity in incomes, more marked now than it has been for more than 60 years, in which the richest 1 per cent own more than the bottom 90 per cent of Americans. The third is "the crisis of our democracy, not just the falling turnout, but the way it is now financed and owned by corporate money and millionaires".

Sanders's fourth point, the one that seems most to ignite his outrage, is "the corporate control over our media, which means most Americans just don't know that healthcare is free in places like Britain, that a college education is free or at least affordable, that most other advanced countries don't share out their wealth in this divisive way".

"The reason is pretty simple. Most Americans get their news from the four big TV networks. ABC is owned by Disney. NBC is owned by General Electric. CBS is owned by Westinghouse. Fox is owned by Rupert Murdoch. You just don't see those corporations reporting on trade unions, on the wealth gap, on the fact that over 90 per cent of the budget cuts the last Congress passed were taken from the poor".

It is refreshing, albeit rare, to hear this kind of passion coming from somewhere other than the rabid right-wing of US politics. And while Sanders is unique in Congress, the interesting feature of the Progressive Caucus is the way it has attracted a growing number of prominent Democrats. Maxine Waters, the California Congresswoman who leads the Black Caucus, spoke at the Progressive meeting last week, and the Democratic whip, David Bonior, is showing promising signs of becoming the kind of aggressive leader for the Democrats that Gingrich became for the Republican radicals in the 1980s. He may not yet be swinging Gingrich's scalp from his belt, but Bonior's relentless pursuit of the Speaker on ethics charges has already crippled Gingrich's leadership, demoralised much of his party, and invigorated the Democratic minority.

The Democratic radicals are also now fighting on the most favourable terrain, defending social security, that core achievement of the New Deal, and Medicare and Medicaid, two of the hallmarks of Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programmes. These are the ideological heartland, capable of rallying most Democrats, some liberal Republicans and broad public support. As the Republicans lose steam in their pursuit of Gingrich's "conservative opportunity society", the Democrats at last know what they are fighting for once again.

A key figure in the rebuilding of the progressive movement has been Robert Borosage, of the leftist think-tank the Institute of Policy Studies. He believes that the conservative era in American politics, marked by the Reagan presidency and the Republican recovery of Congress, is drawing to a close as the social costs of the free market and free trade years become more apparent. The coming of job insecurity to the middle aged and middle class has been matched by new currents of concern among the young. "For most young people, economic insecurity, moral vacuity and political scandal have been almost all they have known," he said. Borosage believes that the environmental movement, the women's movement, and the unusually high black and Hispanic votes cast in last year's election point to the potential for building a progressive constituency.

Last year he set up the Campaign for America's Future, with funds from trade unions and sympathetic liberals, on the slogan "the idea that nothing can be done reflects the complacent sense of the privileged that nothing need be done". The campaign's pamphlet, Taking Back Our Future, is a thoughtful analysis of the American dilemma, that as the linchpin and guarantor of the new global economy it is still failing to provide a rewarding and secure living for vast numbers of ordinary Americans, and failing to offer decent prospects of improvement for many more.

"There is no natural law that dictates growing insecurity and rising inequality. The new economic realities do not require surrender to untrammelled markets but new policy responses that serve the public good. The global economy that makes government action more difficult also makes it more necessary," the pamphlet argues. It calls for a restoration of the American social contract, full employment policies, corporate accountability, and a global trading regime that insists on protecting the environment and workers' rights.

AMERICA'S trade unions, which are seeing a modest rise in membership after 30 years of steady decline, and after the election of a new generation of reform-minded leaders who have battled the old Mafia corruption, represent the main base of the new caucus. The new leaders of the AFL-CIO, John Sweeney and Richard Trumka, have set an ambitious agenda, determined not just to defend the interests of their 13 million members, but to rebuild their political influence, deploy the financial power of their pension funds and plunge $30 million this year into aggressive recruiting.

"We intend to harness workers' pension money in order to make corporations more responsible to workers, to create jobs at home, to create job security," Trumka told the meeting last month of the AFL-CIO's 54-member executive council.

Last year the unions ploughed $35 million into some 60 carefully chosen Congressional seats, where new Republicans with marginal majorities were seen as vulnerable. This effort did not overturn the Republican majority, but helped slash it in half; not a bad showing, considering that corporate donors, chambers of commerce and other panicked business groups scrambled to finance the Republicans to outspend the unions by a margin of eight to one. Despite Republican crowing that they beat off the union's challenge, Sweeney declares himself quite content with the result.

"We drove the national agenda in race after race, and the result will be a sea-change in the new Congress as it legislates under the spotlight of a family agenda instead of the Contract on America," he said. "We were happy the president was re-elected, happy that we won in a lot of congressional races, but the real happiness is with ourselves, what we are developing in energy and enthusiasm from workers. When I'm asked, will we spend as much money next time, I say 'more'. It was money well spent."

Two structural events have recently transformed the situation and reversed the historic decline of US unions. The first has been the co-operation of union reformers with the courts and the federal government to scour out the cancer of organised crime and the Mafia, which perverted large swaths of the labour movement. The triumphant re-election of Ron Carey last month as president of the Teamsters, once a byword for corruption, suggests that this battle is finally being won.

The second structural change has been the way the unions have at last accepted that they inhabit a service economy, not the traditional industrial system in which they thrived. They are recruiting hard among the ethnic minorities, underpaid health and service workers, and building a base beyond public employment and what industrial re-organisation has left of the old factories.

It would be premature to hail the rebirth of an American left, but the rot has stopped and the patient is sitting up and taking nourishment, showing intellectual vigour and political awareness. But the mainstream media refuses to take much notice. Still, under sprightly new editorship, The Nation, with a circulation of 110,000, now outsells The New Republic. The quarterly Dissent, despite a circulation of less than 13,000, is impressive, and The American Prospect, with a monthly circulation of 15,000, is now required reading. To put this in perspective, Gingrich's favourite monthly, the Clinton-bashing American Spectator, sells more than 200,000 copies a month. The left faces a long march, but the terrain is looking more friendly.



US House Speaker Newt Gingrich and his wife, Marianne, leave a prayer service in Washington before last week's vote, in which he was narrowly re-elected to his post. With both Clinton and Gingrich tainted by scandal, something different is stirring in the body politic PHOTOGRAPH: CHARLES REX ARBOGAST

Golf ousts rice fields in Vietnam village

John Chalmers in Tho Da

THE riot police have not been back to Tho Da, not since hundreds of men, women and children beat them off last month with sticks and stones.

"We will fight again," an old woman cried from an animated crowd standing at the entrance to the village, on the northern edge of the Vietnamese capital, Hanoi. "This is our land and people will sacrifice their lives for it."

The villagers grudgingly accept that the rice fields that have supported them and their ancestors for centuries will soon be turned into an 18-hole golf course, but they are determined to get "fair" compensation before the South Korea Daewoo Group and a local partner move in their bulldozers.

Their wrangle with the local authorities responsible for paying compensation has erupted into clashes with the security forces twice in the past year. In May a woman was killed and scores injured when police began ripping up the villagers' rice plants. Four people were jailed.

Dozens were hurt again on December 30, when they battled with police armed with electric prods and tear gas on a new access track across the fields. The villagers burned a lorry and other vehicles to stop the track being completed.

Public demonstrations are rare in communist Vietnam, are rapidly put down, and are almost never reported. This one has been blacked out in the official media, and the local authorities say nothing untoward has happened.

But many fear such disputes will occur increasingly as economic development causes a clash between the communist tenet that all land belongs to the state and the peoples' generations-old sense of communal ownership.

"The biggest concern is whether this is just a one-time trouble or whether it will occur again," said Han Jeong-hyun, the Hanoi director of Kotra, a South Korean government trade and investment promotion agency.

South Korea ranks fifth in a growing list of countries that have companies investing in Vietnam's burgeoning economy, and Daewoo is the biggest single investor. After a run of press reports criticising South Korean firms for mistreating employees in Vietnam, Daewoo is taking no chances.

As Daeha, the joint venture that will build the golf course as part of a $177 million project, stonewalled inquiries last week, Daewoo's chairman arrived unannounced in Hanoi. The Hanoi Moi daily quoted Kim Woo-choong as assuring the Hanoi People's Committee chairman that the project was not just for golfers. "The residents will have a new life in the future through Daewoo's development of local human resources," he said.

Daeha said it had reached agreement with the government on compensation for the farmers, and it was now up to the local authorities to pay out.

"We want the money we are supposed to get according to the government decision. With the amount they have offered us, we cannot live," said a barefoot woman with a child in her arms.

The people of Tho Da, who dare not leave their village for fear of being arrested, say they want the dispute to end. They say that the prime minister, Vo Van Kiet, or some high-ranking government official, should intervene. — *Reuter*

Portugal finds new twist in Nazi gold trail

Ed Vulliamy

DOCUMENTS first unveiled in the United States last Sunday show that papers on which an economic historian in Lisbon is working at the Bank of Portugal will prove conclusively that Switzerland acted as an international banking and laundering agent, and even insurance broker, to the Third Reich.

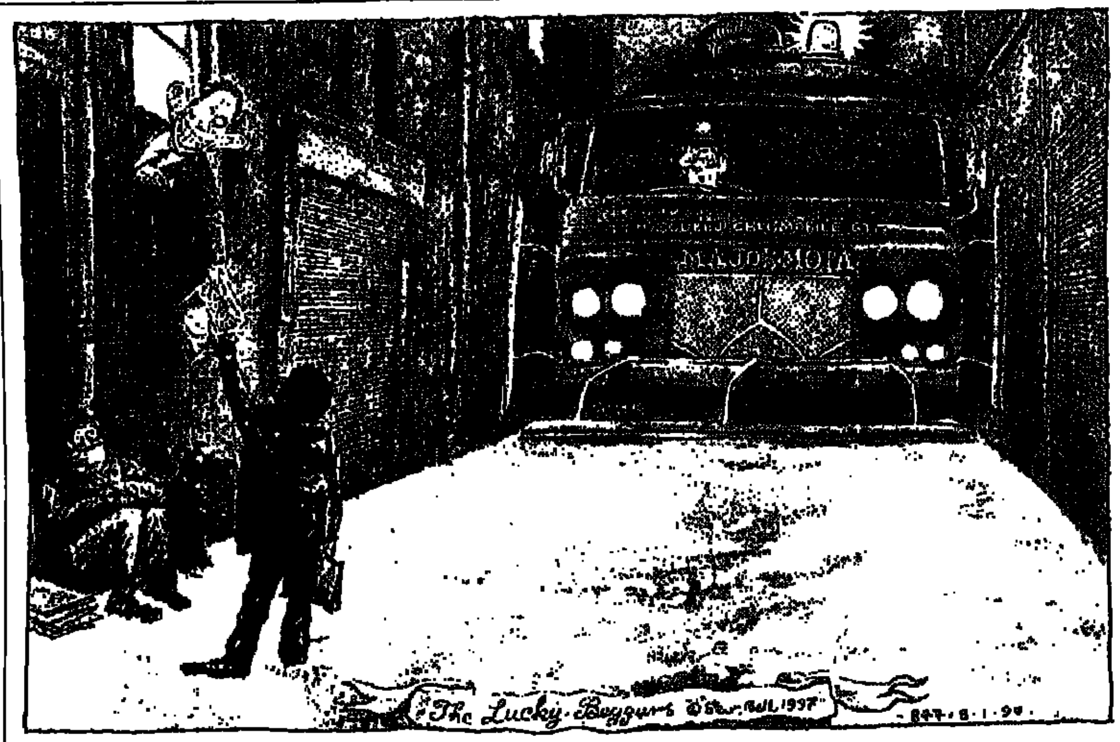
Prof Joaquin da Costa Leite was confirmed last week as having been appointed by the Bank of Portugal to investigate allegations that the country's fascist regime was the second biggest recipient, after Switzerland, of gold looted during Nazi conquests, including bullion bars, trinkets from jewellers' shops, and gold from the teeth of those who died in the death camps.

For just under a month he conducted a secret one-man investigation at the archive. But the latest chapter in the scandal has cast the spotlight on him and his country.

The existence of the top secret documents was made public by the United States Senate banking committee chairman, Alfonse D'Amato, who has spent months investigating the disappearance of looted gold. He said they showed that at the zenith of the Nazi pogrom, the Swiss National Bank sent 280 lorry-loads of looted gold to the two fascist countries on the Iberian peninsula. The lorries carrying the gold, worth between $200 million and $500 million, bore the Swiss national emblem, and were insured by Swiss companies. Spain and Portugal, although sympathetic to the Reich, were officially neutral during the war.

The vice-president of the Swiss National Bank, Jean-Pierre Roth, said on Monday that the figure was one-fourth of the amount claimed by Senator D'Amato, that 70 lorries had been sent, and that the shipments were in keeping with Swiss neutrality. But it undermines Swiss pleas that the country is being "blackmailed" and that its own banking inquiry is adequate to the task of locating the Nazi gold.

The combination of the discovery in Washington and Prof Seite's appointment will force the investigation, which has been trying to trace the the gold from the Reich to Switzerland and then on to final destinations, to look in the opposite direction, back from one of the key destinations to Switzerland.



The Week in Britain James Lewis

Blair scores zero for tolerance

THE Labour leader, Tony Blair, angered some of his more liberal supporters when he came out, for the first time, in support of the New York idea of "zero tolerance" of crime, in which the police clamp down on even the most minor of infringements as part of the drive to clear the streets of beggars, vagrants and people sleeping rough.

In an interview in the Big Issue, a magazine that helps the homeless, Mr Blair said it was "right to be intolerant of people homeless on the streets". He added that it was "important to say we don't tolerate the small crimes; that you don't tolerate the graffiti on the wall".

Mr Blair denied that he was trying to win the law-and-order vote by outflanking the "tough" policies of the Home Secretary, Michael Howard. Indeed, he was doing no more than echoing his shadow home secretary, Jack Straw, who angered leftwingers last year when he promised that Labour would reclaim the streets from "beggars, winos, addicts and squeegee merchants".

Realising that he may have stepped too far, Mr Blair did a spot of back-pedalling, saying his words should be construed as an attack on homelessness, not on the homeless.

But the damage was done. Zero tolerance for drug-dealing, petty crime and aggressive begging could also be seen as zero tolerance for the down-and-outs, the mentally ill and the social inadequates, who also clutter up the streets of many inner cities. Surely not what Mr Blair meant.

David Maclean, a junior Home Office minister with a gaffe-strewn career, tilted the debate to another extreme when he claimed that most of London's beggars were Scots, and were on the streets from choice. There were no "genuine" beggars, he said, because there were plenty of social benefits available. He, too, later modified his remarks.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE social services were criticised in a report that examined its handling of the case of six-year-old Rikki Neave, who was on its "at-risk" register and was found strangled near his Peterborough home two years ago. His mother, Ruth, was later cleared of his murder but jailed for seven years after admitting cruelty.

The report criticised the way the case was dealt with from the moment Ms Neave became pregnant at the age of 17, while in council care. It made 29 recommendations, but apportioned no blame. The report was itself condemned as superficial and inadequate by Rikki's father and grandparents, who demanded a wider public inquiry.

Children's charities said little had been learnt from a series of inquiries into the deaths of children while in local authority care. Nearly all have highlighted the same problems: inexperienced officials, poor communication and record-keeping, overworked social workers and, at times, over-adherence to ideology rather than common sense.

THE BISHOP of Edinburgh gave unprecedented endorsement to the Labour party when he said it offered "a chance to transform the unjust reality of life in Britain". He accused the Tories of deceitful self-interest and lack of moral vision.

The Most Rev Richard Holloway, head of the Scottish Episcopal Church, said in an article in the Church Times that "the moral vision of socialism has always been higher than that of conservatism, and it was Karl Marx who understood why".

But the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, and the Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume, are both uneasy that their respective Churches may be accused of intervening in the general election. The Home Office minister, Ann Widdecombe, attacked five Anglican bishops for making "party political announcements" under the guise of New Year messages.

A CIRCUS-LIKE TV "debate", followed by a phone-in vote, purported to show that two-thirds of the UK population still support the monarchy, but that Scotland was strongly republican. Though woefully unscientific, the phone-in findings were roughly in accord with more conventional polls.

Billed as "the greatest TV debate of all time", with a studio audience of 3,000 bused in to Birmingham's National Exhibition Centre, the programme did at least suggest that the future of the monarchy is a live political issue, even if politicians shy away from it. Some 2.5 million people "voted", and even more tried, and failed to get through.

The debate, more reminiscent of a pub brawl, also indicated greater support for Prince William as king than for his father, the Prince of Wales. The heir to the throne is already working on a strategy to improve his image, and the more popular Princess Diana is reported to have ended the "war" with her former husband to protect the future of the monarchy for their sons.

DAYS after his second attempt to circumnavigate the globe in his balloon, Virgin Challenger, failed after less than 24 hours, business tycoon Richard Branson announced that he had not given up. "The race is back on," he said. "We will begin testing this week."

His ambitions were revived by the failure of a Swiss challenger, Bertrand Piccard, whose Breitling Orbiter was forced to earth by leaking kerosene fumes after only six hours. Mr Branson did at least stay aloft for 20 hours. The US millionaire challenger, Steve Fossett, embarks on a further attempt later this month.

Austin

HOW ABOUT SAILING ROUND THE WORLD UPSIDE-DOWN?

Virgin

Virgin PUBLICITY

UK's 'soft touch' image seen as ploy to reduce immigration

Paul Brown

THE Government has deliberately labelled Britain a soft touch for asylum seekers whom it has frequently described as bogus in order to introduce tough legislation to exclude as many as possible, the Royal Geographical Society was told last week.

Asylum seekers had been portrayed as deviants whose increase in numbers was potentially beyond the control of the state, Craig Young told the society's annual conference in Exeter. "The response required is thus one of the strong state to regulate the threat that asylum seeking apparently poses."

Dr Young, from the environment and geography department at Manchester Metropolitan university, had analysed ministerial statements and speeches used to justify the introduction of the UK Asylum and Immigration Bill of 1995.

The Government had portrayed the bill as a tough response necessary to maintain race relations by controlling immigration. It put forward an ideology in which the preservation of a free society and a free economy was guaranteed by the authority of a strong state. The imagery of tides and floods, and of the UK being swamped by immigrants, echoed Conservative rhetoric from the 1960s onwards, Dr Young said.

The numbers gaining asylum or "exceptional leave to remain" had fallen rapidly since 1986 from more than 80 per cent to around 20 per cent, producing a low in 1994 of 4,485.

But the new act had taken things even further. According to the ideology of Conservative ministers such as Peter Lilley, Michael Howard and Ann Widdecombe, it was the increasing number of those trying to get round the immigration controls by applying for asylum who were the problem, he said.

"This construction relies on linking them to abuse of the system and illegal activities. Not only are they 'scrounging', they are also 'foreigners doing it in our country'."

Part of the context had been the portrayal of Britain as a country with a good record of accepting asylum seekers, but the UK was taking an increasingly hard line on the issue like its European neighbours.

● Mohammed al-Mas'ari, the Saudi dissident who has been the principal irritant to Britain's relations with Saudi Arabia for three years, is broke and virtually inactive.

Dr Mas'ari heads the Committee for the Defence of Legitimate Rights, the first opposition group to emerge in Saudi Arabia. He arrived in this country in 1994, posing as a Yemeni businessman, and went on to become Britain's most controversial political refugee. Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, tried to deport him to Dominica, but the courts ruled that he could stay.

2m children malnourished

Heather Mills and Martin Bright

UP TO 2 million British children are suffering ill-health and stunted growth because of malnutrition, according to a report to be published this week. Poverty on a scale not seen since the 1930s is blamed for the return of rickets, anaemia and tuberculosis — and for reversing the recent trend of bigger, healthier children.

The Hunger Within, a report by the School Milk Campaign, blames the Government for cutting free and cheap school meals and milk provision — the only source of nutritious food for many poor children.

The survey of 179 local authorities and 36 health authorities found evidence throughout Britain of deprived children being underweight and below average height. It also found that TB was now far more prevalent than whooping cough. In inner city pockets of deprivation, it discloses widespread anaemia from lack of iron — a condition that affects both mental and physical development. And it produces further evidence of pockets of rickets from lack of vitamin D.

The report is the latest in a series attacking government policy that has made the UK the most unequal country in the West, and says children's health is being jeopardised by the withdrawal of EU subsidies for "the miracle 1p tax cut". — *The Observer*

Butcher charged

Erlend Clouston

THE butcher whose meat has been linked with the *E. coli* food poisoning epidemic that killed 16 elderly Scots and infected more than 400 others was charged with culpable and reckless conduct last week.

John Barr, aged 51, appeared in private at Hamilton Sheriff Court and was released on bail. No date for his trial has been set.

The criminal proceedings will delay the fatal accident inquiry into the deaths. The interim findings of Professor Hugh Pennington's inquiry into the worst *E. coli* outbreak in Europe, due for release this week, may also be delayed if they could prejudice the trial.

Mr Barr appeared on charges arising from the alleged supply of cooked meat from his shop in Wishaw. The *E. coli* outbreak was first linked with Mr Barr's premises after it emerged he had supplied steak pies to a Wishaw Old Church lunch on November 17. The first alleged victim of the outbreak, 80-year-old Harry Shaw, died nine days later.

At its height last month, the outbreak had infected 421 people across central Scotland, 16 of them fatally. Seven of the elderly victims had attended the Wishaw church meal. The last death, of a 91-year-old pensioner, was on December 28.

Dr Norman Simmons, chairman of the government-backed working party that carried out a comprehensive study of the deadly bug, believes a "considerable improvement" in food hygiene — including improved slaughtering methods — is vital to prevent its spread.

In Brief

A LETTER bomb that injured two security guards at the London offices of an Arab newspaper was postmarked Alexandria, Egypt, indicating it may be the work of Islamic militants.

THE Prison Service has ordered an inquiry into the last 11 days in the life of Geoffrey Thomas, a 25-year-old remand prisoner, which were spent shackled to a hospital bed in Cardiff until two hours before his death from stomach cancer on January 3.

THE Government admitted that hospitals were seeing unprecedented numbers of emergency patients this winter as doctors warned that the NHS was facing its worst financial crisis for a decade.

THE Roman Catholic Church has set up a team to investigate the needs of women who have had affairs with priests, raising the possibility of support for them and their children.

TWO British nurses accused of murdering a colleague in Saudi Arabia have had emotional meetings with their families.

HOMICIDE in the Metropolitan Police area has fallen to its lowest level for 15 years. There were 144 murders in 1996, compared with 171 in 1995.

A PLAN for Britain to begin developing a joint anti-ballistic missile defence system is awaiting Cabinet approval. Its immediate purpose would be to protect British troops overseas in regions such as the Gulf.

ALMOST nine out of 10 young blacks, who could swing up to 50 marginal seats at the election, say they will not vote.

OXFORD university has scrapped a controversial plan to build a £40 million business school on a site dubbed the "landscape gateway" to the city.

MORE THAN 70 immigration detainees have begun a hunger strike at Rochester prison, Kent, in protest at being held in jail without a court hearing.

LABOUR has committed itself to a full review of quarantine laws, and the Government has indicated it may relax rules and allow pets to travel with their owners on holiday.

LORD MAYHEW, a former Labour minister who became a Liberal, has died aged 81.

ELSPETH HUXLEY, author of Flame Trees Of Thika and one of the most distinguished writers of her generation, has died aged 89.

Loyalist ceasefire on edge

Vivek Chaudhary in Belfast

AN RUC patrol came under mortar attack in west Belfast on Monday as political arguments raged over the state of the loyalist ceasefire.

Police said at least two vehicles were travelling through the area. Early reports indicated that a mortar was fired. There were no reports of any injuries and the area was sealed off.

The attack came after the RUC chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, warned that an intensification of the IRA's campaign could lead to a return to full-scale violence, involving retaliatory attacks by loyalist paramilitary groups.

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, was adamant that the loyalist ceasefire remained intact. But David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party, said it appeared to be "disintegrating".

The comments came as multi-party talks reopened in Belfast following a one-month recess, and against a backdrop of the increased IRA attacks and claims that loyalist paramilitaries have breached their own ceasefire and the Mitchell principles on non-violence by carrying out at least two bomb attacks on leading republicans.

Delegates spent most of Monday at Stormont insisting that the Government clarify its position on the loyalist ceasefire, declared by the Combined Loyalist Military Command. They also want the Government to decide whether or not the paramilitaries' representatives — the Progressive Unionist Party, which is closely linked to the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force, and the Ulster Democratic Party, for the outlawed Ulster Defence Association — should continue taking part in the talks.

Sir Patrick said: "I am very glad that the Combined Loyalist Military Command has not moved back from the ceasefire which it announced 27 months ago. I very much hope that the loyalists will not descend to the evil of a resumed terrorist campaign . . . Apart from anything else, it would be deeply unwise, in the interests of the loyalists themselves."

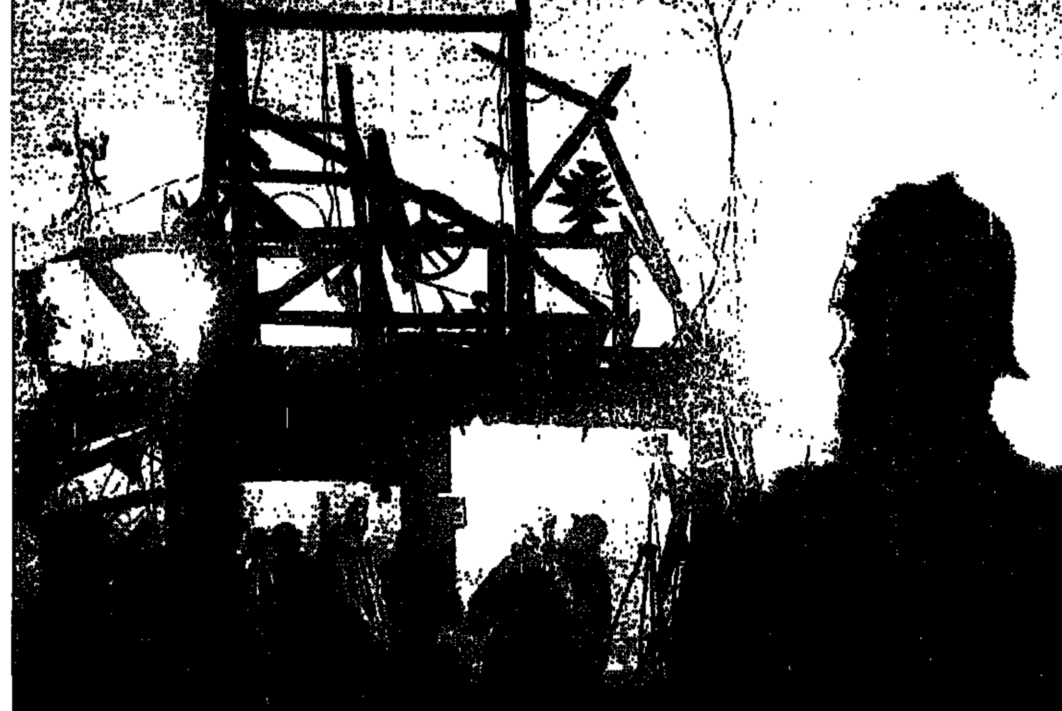
His comments, however, failed to appease delegates emerging from the talks, who claim that the peace process is in danger of falling apart.

Mr Trimble said: "I think we need to know what's going on. There's a general assumption that the loyalist ceasefire is slowly disintegrating.

"I don't know what the position is. We have seen a couple of serious incidents attributed to loyalists. We will be asking Sir Patrick Mayhew to give us a formal assessment of the situation. It looks as though the loyalist ceasefire is in danger of collapsing. I hope that's not the case and that will not happen. We want to haul it back rather than tip it over the edge."

The nine political parties and representatives of the British and Irish governments taking part in the talks will also attempt to come to an agreement over the decommissioning of arms.

A plenary session is to take place on January 27, and the former US senator, George Mitchell, has indicated that he will put forward his own proposals if the parties cannot reach an agreement.



No through road . . . Bailiffs and police officers move in to evict protestors, many chained to concrete lock-ons in a series of underground tunnels and bunkers, on the route of a £50 million dual carriageway near Honiton, east Devon, last Sunday. They took advantage of the absence of some protesters, who had travelled to Newbury for the anniversary of work starting on the bypass there PHOTOGRAPH: TIM CUFF

Former PM joins anti-bugging protests

Richard Norton-Taylor and Alan Travis

LORD CALLAGHAN, the Labour elder statesman, has joined the growing ranks of opposition to a bill giving police wide powers to bug homes and offices, dashing government hopes that the controversial measure would get an easy ride through Parliament.

The Police Bill, which returns to the Lords next week, would give senior officers unprecedented discretion to authorise warrants to combat "serious crime". In all other European and Commonwealth democracies, the police have to seek bugging warrants from a judge.

The former Labour prime minister said: "I don't like people being judge and jury in their own cause. I am absolutely convinced there should be independent authorisation. That is a fundamental principle."

The bill is causing unlikely alliances, including one between Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, and Jack Straw, his Labour shadow. They argue that the bill does no more than place on statute what the police have been able to do since 1984 under Home Office guidelines. However, a report by Statewatch, which monitors police and intelligence agencies, challenges their claim.

It shows the guidelines, though non-statutory, impose stricter conditions on the police and include a much narrower definition of what is meant by "serious crime".

Mr Straw plans to table an amendment this week whereby breaches of lawyer-client confidentiality by police bugs should be allowed only in cases where there is strong evidence of criminal conspiracy. But he has made clear that he will not oppose the meat of the bill.

The bill is being opposed by a small coalition of independent peers, Liberal Democrats and a law lord. Lawyers and civil liberty groups are beginning to mount a combined assault on the bill.

The Police Bill gives chief constables and their deputies — rather than the courts — the power to issue warrants to bug and enter property, homes and offices whenever they think it is necessary to combat "serious crime".

In what is developing into an increasingly unsettling debate for Labour's front bench, lawyers and civil rights watchdogs rebutted Mr Straw's claim that all the bill does is confirm existing practice.

The bill also gives wide powers to the National Criminal Intelligence Service. The service, it says, will be able to conduct surveillance operations on behalf of "any government department" and any "law enforcement agency" in the world.

Liberty, the civil rights group, points out there are no controls on the quality or content of the information collected. The bill describes "serious crime" not only as offences that involve use of violence or substantial financial gain. The phrase also includes offences where an individual might expect a prison sentence of three years or more on first conviction — which would include crimes such as street robbery — or those involving "a large number of persons in pursuit of a common purpose", a term that could embrace, for example, anti-road protesters.

In all other European countries, as well as the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, authority has to be given by a judge, says Justice, the British section of the International Commission of Jurists.

Blair says tax will not go up

Ewen MacAskill

RISES in personal taxation were in effect ruled out last week by Tony Blair, the Labour leader, following months of speculation that the party would increase the top rate of income tax from 40p to 50p.

Mr Blair set out to blunt the Conservatives' key message, that Labour would raise taxes. He made it clear that he does not envisage any rises in tax, either direct or indirect. He set out Labour's programme for government — which ranges from an emergency jobs package for the young to making education the top priority — and said it had been fully costed.

Under the slogan *Leading Britain into the Future*, Mr Blair said: "Where we plan to spend money we say precisely where that money comes from. There is no evasion, no double-dealing, no hidden agenda. The Tory propaganda that our programme necessarily means tax increases is simply false."

A senior Labour source echoed this, saying that if the Tories left office tomorrow, the programme would be implemented in full without any tax increases. If any surprise new policy emerged between now and the general election, that would have to be rethought but it was a remote possibility.

Mr Blair, who made John Major's "weak" leadership an election issue, called on the Prime Minister to stop "faffing around" and set an election date. Unlike Mr Major, who launched the Conservative pre-election campaign on his own, Mr Blair was flanked by senior colleagues Gordon Brown, Robin Cook, John Prescott and Margaret Beckett.

A final meeting between Mr Blair and key members of the shadow cabinet to discuss tax is still to be held. Mr Brown, the shadow chancellor, will not want to be make a definitive statement on tax. But after these latest comments it is unlikely that he will suddenly pull a tax rise out of the hat.

The Tory party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, continued to insist that Labour's figures did not add up. He demanded to know who would pay for the £700 million gap that he claimed existed between the cost of Mr Blair's "five early pledges" of priority action and the sums Labour has allocated for them.

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January 19 1997

PM bids for Asian trade — and votes

Michael White in Calcutta

JOHN MAJOR last week made an uninhibited pitches for British business in Asia and for Asian votes in Britain at the general election.

Concentrating on upwardly mobile British Asians, he praised their "huge contribution" as public sector workers and in particular "the increasing Indian presence in the ownership and management of British companies".

The Prime Minister wrapped his twin messages around an impassioned defence of global free trade and a warning of catastrophe if the emerging economic giants of Asia retreat into protectionism, as the world did in the 1930s.

Addressing what may have been the largest audience of his career at an industrial conference in Calcutta, Mr Major mixed praise for the Indian government's commitment to privatisation and deregulation with a scarcely veiled criticism of its entrenched bureaucracy and corruption.

With Anglo-Indian trade rapidly expanding to around £3.5 billion a year, Mr Major warned his business audience that it was "not all plain sailing. Bureaucratic inertia and a lack of transparency in the award of contracts continue to discourage foreign investors."

Sixty leading British industrialists accompanied Mr Major on his six-day tour of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan to renew the drive to prise open lucrative markets such as telecommunications, insurance and air transport.

But the unstated goal of the visit to the sub-continent — in the 50th anniversary year of independence from Britain — is also to woo ethnic minority votes in marginal British constituencies.

With the election less than four months away, the Prime Minister plans to capitalise on goodwill and publicity generated by his visit with a rally for 400 Tory Asian activists on his return.

In one speech he even invoked the Indian community's contribution in "reinforcing important values in our society, the importance of the family, the need for a sound ethical framework to govern our conduct, a belief in our ability to make a better life for our children".

Labour, which has traditionally claimed 70 per cent of the British-Asian vote — the largest ethnic minority at 3 per cent of the British electorate — believes they could be decisive in up to 12 of its 60 targeted marginals, mainly in London and the Midlands. In Slough and South Ilford they make up 25 per cent of the electorate.

In addition to the threat that successful Asians will emulate white counterparts and support the Tories, Labour has had to fight off allegations that a Blair government might try to internationalise the long-standing dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, a move that would anger Indian voters. The Tories remain studiously neutral.

● Mr Major has opted for a high-risk strategy to put his government's popularity to the test by agreeing to hold the long-awaited Wirral South byelection just weeks before voters are expected to go to the polls in the general election.

The unexpected move was announced by the Conservative party chairman, Brian Mawhinney, at a Westminster news conference last week, ending speculation that the Tory hierarchy would delay the poll because of fears of defeat.

The byelection is expected to take place next month or on March 6 — and leaves Mr Major bracing himself for a make-or-break result in a battle that will be fiercely contested by all the main parties as a "warm-up" for the general election.



John Major is cheered by factory workers during his visit to the GEC Alsthom factory in Calcutta last week as part of a six-day tour of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan PHOTOGRAPH: BIKAS DAS

List of oil spill errors

Gary Younge

THE Government and companies involved in the Sea Empress oil spill could face prosecution, it emerged last week following the leak of a draft report into the incident.

The draft report blames a "breakdown of communications" and "unnecessary bureaucratic procedures" for the 70,000-tonne oil spillage off the Welsh coast last February, which led to the death of more than 25,000 sea birds and cost around £10 million to clear up.

The report, drawn up by the Marine Accident Investigation Board and obtained by the BBC, reveals a catalogue of avoidable errors that substantially aggravated the impact of the original accident.

If the joint investigation, spearheaded by the Department of Transport and the Environment Agency, finds that the negligence of an individual, company or a government body led to the disaster, then "they should be made to pay", a spokeswoman for the agency said.

"We are hoping to conclude our investigation by March, after which we will give full consideration to all options open to us, including prosecution. It would be possible to prosecute the Government but highly unusual," she said. The report suggests that several parties could share blame for the disaster.

According to the BBC, the principal mistakes that contributed to the escalation of the original accident include the fact that the waters around the entrance to the Milford Haven harbour were not properly charted.

The official salvage team did not realise it could have got the grounded Sea Empress safely into port two days after the accident because it was given inaccurate information about the tides.

Dinner ladies win equal pay

Alex Bellos

DINNER ladies won an equal pay case last week that could eventually cost councils more than £1 billion.

The 15,000 women employed by the former Cleveland county council were awarded £4 million — between £600 and £5,400 each — after taking the authority to an industrial tribunal.

The women, members of the GMB and Unison unions, asserted that their pay was up to 40 per cent lower than other workers in the authority — including gardeners and refuse collectors — because the men had bonuses consolidated into their wages.

A Unison spokeswoman said: "This is an important case. It is the first time catering workers have been recognised as being entitled to a bonus, the same as other manual workers. There could be a knock-on effect. There are around 160 other authorities who don't pay bonuses. After this decision, they are vulnerable to similar claims, which could total in excess of £1 billion."

Rodney Bickerstaffe, Unison general secretary, said: "Women manual workers are entitled to expect the same treatment as men . . . Other councils should now examine their pay rates."

A statement from the Equal Opportunities Commission said wages were on average 20 per cent less. "Male and female manual workers often receive the same basic pay, but jobs done by men are more likely to have access to bonuses."

The same women won £1 million at a tribunal last July, where they claimed Cleveland was guilty of sex discrimination by imposing wages on them without union agreement. The equal pay case was a separate and subsequent action.

Teachers' early retirement under fire

Donald MacLeod

GILLIAN SHEPHARD, the Education Secretary, last week accused teachers of abusing the Government's early retirement scheme, which she wants to axe to save £480 million. In a robust response to protests from headteachers and classroom staff, ministers are telling teachers they should work until they are 60 — only one in five now does so.

Early retirement deals had been overused, she said. "It defies credibility that four out of five teachers need to retire early, especially as quite substantial numbers are then employed as supply teachers."

John Major stepped in to support his Education Secretary's hard line. He told teachers in his Huntingdon constituency: "We simply do not believe that four out of five teachers are all incapable of teaching until the age of 60."

Mrs Shephard's plan to shift the costs on to schools and local authorities — effectively ending the scheme — has provoked a stampede to try to beat the March deadline. More than 11,000 teachers are estimated to have applied for early retirement in the middle of the school year. Last year 13,000 retired early, at an average cost of £37,000 — a total of more than £480 million.

The Association of Teachers and Lecturers is seeking a judicial review of Mrs Shephard's proposals. In Manchester, the National Association of Schoolmasters and Union of Women Teachers is taking legal action against the local authority for reneging on early retirement for its members.

Ministers, and even teachers' union leaders, have been taken aback by the level of anger among teachers, including those in grant maintained and independent schools, and the issue has also focused the more general discontent about workload and lack of resources.

Headteachers are threatening to disrupt teacher training for thousands of students in the coming year in protest — a move that drew a stinging response from Mrs Shephard, whose husband taught until he was 60.

For the past 20 years, teachers have been able to retire from the age of 50 without losing pension benefits. The increase in demand for early retirement has resulted in severe underfunding in the pension scheme.

In response to a teacher in his constituency, the Prime Minister wrote last week that the changes were the most sensible way of making employers accountable for decisions on premature retirement.

An important aim was to retain older, more experienced teachers in the profession. "At present, only one in five teachers stays until the age of 60. There will still be plenty of scope for employers to retire those teachers who are genuinely burnt out. Many teachers seem to regard early retirement as a right but that has never been the case."

● Examiners were "excessively generous" to A level candidates from independent schools, an inquiry by the Government's exams watchdog has found.

State school pupils could have missed out on some of the most sought-after university places because of the inconsistencies exposed among senior English examiners at the Oxford and Cambridge School Examinations Board.

Virtually all the A level English candidates for the Oxford and Cambridge board in 1996 were from independent schools. The inquiry found examiners altered grades substantially on the basis of schools' reputations, with not enough reference to the papers. The examiners rejected the criticism as "ludicrous".

Poll boost for Tory sceptics

TORY Eurosceptics will be encouraged by a new poll, taken across four countries, which reveals overwhelming opposition to a European single currency in Britain and widespread doubts in Germany, *writes Ewen MacAskill.*

Eurosceptics have been pressing the Conservative leadership to adopt a much harder line against European Union integration in the belief that this will be a general election winner.

The poll, published last weekend, was carried out by the Daily Telegraph in conjunction with French, German and Italian newspapers. It is said to be the first in which identical questions have been put simultaneously to the public in four EU countries. Asked how they would vote if there were a referendum on a single currency in the next few months, those polled in Britain rejected it by 56 per cent, with only 26 per cent in favour.

In Germany, the driving force behind the single currency, only 43 per cent favour it, with 44 per cent against.

In France and Italy there was, unsurprisingly, overwhelming support. Without German participation, however, the project would be doomed.

The poll shows a sharp turn in Britain against the EU. Only 42 per cent favoured staying in the EU, against 38 per cent who wanted to withdraw, a gap of only four compared with one of 11 last June, and 32 in June 1995.

Peace in our continent

THE FUTURE of Nato, rather than of Hong Kong or even the Middle East, may become the most explosive international issue for 1997. Last week the German foreign minister, Klaus Kinkel, echoed Chancellor *Kohl — back from talks in Moscow —* in insisting that a solution can be found to the dispute with Russia over the expansion of the alliance. The prime minister of Poland, one of the beneficiaries (along with the Czech Republic and Hungary) of the proposed "enlargement", said Warsaw was forging ahead with plans to join. Yet most observers in Moscow interpret Boris Yeltsin's hard line against expansion as much more than a negotiating tactic. Russian hostility has not slackened: there are genuine fears that the eastward expansion will change the strategic balance. And Mr Yeltsin has very little room for manoeuvre politically if he appears to soften his position. Meanwhile Washington is deeply divided on the subject — by contrast with the European capitals where the case for enlargement seems to be going through on the nod.

Part of the pressure for enlarging this year arises from an arbitrary timetable. Bill Clinton wants to register the deed as one of the first fruits of his second term and to fulfil the pledge made during his election campaign. Both Washington and Nato want the invitations to be issued in time for formal admission in 1999 — the 50th anniversary of the alliance, and the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. This means that they will go out this July, after a hectic series of bilateral meetings to try to win over the Russians. The potential new members themselves are driven less by the calendar than by a historical sense of unease, talked up by the east European lobbies in the US. Yet the precedent of Soviet expansion is not a reliable guide. Is anyone seriously suggesting that Russia, under any conceivable leadership, would seek to re-occupy Warsaw, Budapest or Prague?

If history is so important to the east Europeans, why should it be less so to the Russians? And if Russia is assumed to have a greater affinity with Europe, why then must the two be kept in separate security baskets? Enlargement of Nato also implies extending its nuclear guarantee (even though the weapons would not be deployed on the soil of the new members). Russian generals are already talking about strengthening tactical nuclear protection, and the Start-2 treaty could become a casualty. This would lead away from the real nuclear priority, to scale down the US and Russian arsenals further and concentrate on the problem of "loose nukes" in other hands. The real task, critics argue, is to develop a new all-embracing "security architecture" in Europe that will replace Nato missiles as the guarantor of peace. The proposed "S-17" consultative body made up of the 16 Nato states plus Russia is a transparent attempt to square the circle that will end up by satisfying no one. Just what would meet the bill is much harder to say: it needs time and serious thought to attempt to reach a solution. *Neither are afforded by the hasty scramble* now under way.

Bibi's hopeless status quo

THE BOMB that may finally wreck the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations has not yet exploded. The real significance of last week's two small devices in Tel Aviv was that no incident had occurred since the suicide bomb last March, which led to the postponement of the Israeli withdrawal from Hebron — and sealed the electoral fate of Shimon Peres. The silence of the big league bombers gives the lie to Israeli complaints that Yasser Arafat is not "fulfilling his bargain" to keep terrorism under control. On the contrary, it indicates how effective the security dimension of the Palestinian Authority has become. Yet it takes two to make a bargain, and in the current deadlock the absence of Hamas from the scene can hardly be taken for granted.

Indeed many believe that the bargain struck at Oslo is already beyond reach. The former mayor of Jerusalem, Meron Benvenisti, argues that the discussion "is not over the implementation of the *Oslo agreement, but over who will pay the price for its failure*". Opinion in Arab countries increasingly envisages a "cold peace", in which the dialogue grinds to a sterile, angry halt. Tactically, Mr Arafat may already be seeking to ensure that Binyamin Netanyahu emerges from such an outcome as the undisputed villain. But there is a huge difference in goals. The Palestinian side is still committed to the explicit terms of Oslo and the implicit understanding of at least a quasi-state. Mr Netanyahu wishes not only to radically revise the terms, but has rejected from the start any wider implication.

But the question that baffles the critics and puzzles many on the right who otherwise agree with him is whether the prime minister has an alternative scenario in mind. In a series of recent interviews, Mr Netanyahu has shed some light on his deeper thoughts. He asserts that the main cause of the Middle East dispute is "the clash between ourselves and the Arab world" and that the Palestinian problem was "the result of this conflict, not its principal cause". This view may attract covert sympathy in Damascus but sends an alarming message *to all Palestinians, and many Israelis.* Mr Netanyahu has indicated that he is eager to move on the "final status" negotiations before the interim arrangements are completed. If Mr Netanyahu's musings mean anything, it is that for him the final status is merely the status quo.

Mr Netanyahu has also been candid in rejecting what he calls the "clear assumption" of Oslo that both sides wish to establish a Palestinian state. He argues to the contrary that if the aspirations of Palestinian nationalism were satisfied in the West Bank, this would spread to the Arabs in Israel proper and that "there would be no end to it". In theory, his argument should lead instead to full incorporation of the West Bank into Israel — and full democratic rights within Israel for all Arabs living there. Yet separation, not integration, remains the policy of his Likud party — resulting once again in an unsustainable status quo.

A compromise may yet be reached on the latest sticking point: Israel's refusal to adhere to the timetable for withdrawal from the West Bank. Mr Arafat insists this is a point of principle but he could in the end accept a formula that would deliver at least two of the three stages of withdrawal within a reasonable time-frame. So agreement on Hebron might yet be delivered. But what will happen then, when it is discovered that nothing more lies ahead? Israeli opinion is severely divided, yet somehow — perhaps through a new coalition — the debate has to face up to this ultimate question of the relationship between Palestinians and Jews. Failure to answer it is the bombshell that could finally wreck the peace process.

Adventurers' crucial links

THE BEST stories have a beginning, a middle and an end, and Tony Bullimore's rescue was an absolute classic. In the beginning, things went dreadfully wrong for the shipwrecked round-the-world yachtsman. In the middle, his survival chances veered from bad to good and back again *as the meagre evidence pointed* first one way and then another. In the end, everything came climactically right. It was the perfect ending to an almost incredible tale.

They don't write them like that any more. And yet this was very much a late 20th century outcome to a brave man's ordeal. Fifty years ago, people were raised on a diet of stories about heroic adventurers exactly like Mr Bullimore. Except that in most of these earlier stories, the hero wasn't snatched from the mountainous freezing seas at all. He or she was much more likely to have perished unknown in the deep. The epic tales of that era often ended in tantalising disaster: Captain Scott failing to return from the South Pole. Colonel Fawcett lost in the Amazonian jungle, Amelia Earhart flying off round the world, never to return.

Today's adventurers are brave heroes, too, but they have an invisible safety-net of global communications. Unlike Captain Scott, Sir Ranulph Fiennes could be airlifted out of Antarctica when things went wrong. Unlike Colonel Fawcett, the British expedition lost in the Borneo jungle three years ago could be found by a massive rescue operation. Unlike Amelia Earhart, the circumnavigating Richard Branson was never out of contact with the ground. Bullimore and Thierry Dubois survived because, even in the remote Southern Ocean, they remained part of the global village. In *1997 it is probably easier to die unknown* in the middle of London than to disappear forever in the inaccessible places of the world.

Conspiracy of silence on global economy

Jonathan Eyal

THE first summit of the World Trade Organisation ended last month in Singapore with smug satisfaction. The WTO now embraces more than 120 countries, all ostensibly committed to free trade. True, China and Russia are still not members, and some sectors, such as financial services and *agriculture, remain highly regu*lated. But all member states have pledged to eliminate such snags, and trade across frontiers is now rising at four times the rate of growth in world gross domestic product.

Having been the cliché of academic conferences for decades, the age of the global economy is now a reality, and a very forceful one: foreign direct investment amounted to a staggering $315 billion in 1995, and is rising fast. Yet whatever was on the agenda at the WTO summit, one issue was studiously avoided: the problem of democratic control and accountability in such an interdependent international economy. The old institutions of the nation-state are *decaying, yet international* organisations can hardly fill the void. To make matters worse, leaders in every Western state pretend the problem does not exist — despite evidence of a widespread, if unfocused, anxiety among all democracies.

The supposed end of the era of ideologies has reduced Western party politics to a petty bureaucratic squabble: since economic priorities now appear pre-ordained, the dispute is only about who is better suited to apply them. Britain's Conservatives are offering Thatcherism without Thatcher; their Labour counterparts are espousing conservatism without the Conservatives.

In the rest of Europe, the game is the same: while Germany's Chancellor Kohl or France's President Chirac are demanding sacrifices today in return for a promise of a glorious monetary union around the corner, their political opponents are merely offering the same monetary union with none of the pain. The electorate should be forgiven for disbelieving all of them, since it *remains aware of only one tiny snag*: although apparently God-given, current economic policies somehow do not deliver either the predictability or the prosperity to which they were accustomed in the past.

The world recession seems to be over, but EU unemployment is still rising, to 18 million today. Work re-training schemes operate everywhere, yet half of Europe's unemployed have been without a job for more than a year, and so are probably unemployable. The British "economic miracle", now touted by the Government as an example for the entire continent, is based on the elimination of workers' rights, hardly a recipe for social stability. And, while everyone extols the virtues of free trade, few are prepared to accept that this means losing a job because someone in China or Korea can produce the same goods cheaper; economic theories about "comparative advantages" may be fine for erudite academics, but are useless as a political platform.

Politicians are in the business of purveying good news, and a conspiracy of silence is now sustained by both governments and oppositions. Everyone promises to preserve and even expand existing welfare entitlements, and every politician still pays lip service to the idea of a seemingly inexorable economic growth, which somehow will solve all contradictions.

The problem is that all Western leaders continue to derive their legitimacy from national elections but, in practice, they have little control over an economy that is truly global. *Although not familiar with* the intricacies of financial transactions, people everywhere are only too painfully aware of realities: those who affect their lives are usually unknown and unelected; those who ostensibly hold political power prove unable to exercise it.

The obvious answer to intertwined economies could be provided by international institutions, such as the European Union. Yet the Union remains a bureaucratic construction founded on the premise that regulating the size of eggs (usually without even telling the hen) would gradually draw Europeans closer. It has a directly elected Parliament that decides very little, and a Commission that, although unelected, rules on most issues. Far from answering the needs of a global economy, the EU is merely replicating the internal problems of its member states on a grander scale.

AND THE start of monetary union will make matters worse. The European Central Bank will be ruled by a council composed of the governors of the continent's national banks, all unelected, and all legally independent of their governments. They, in turn, will elect an executive board, which will be responsible to itself. Instead of greater accountability, Europe will experience the new concept of "photocopy democracy": elected leaders will appoint bank governors who, in turn, appoint their representatives who, in turn, will make the real economic decisions for an entire continent. And, as with every copy of a photocopy, the text will become progressively less readable.

What would be the purpose of electing a national government if it *could not decide on most* financial matters? How would, say, Spanish workers react when they are dismissed from work because someone whose name they cannot even pronounce has decided in Frankfurt that their country's deficit is too large for their own good? No answer is provided: Britain's parties are ready to debate everything about monetary union apart *from* the question of the Bank's control.

A good case can be made that free trade is inevitable: countries that tried to resist the trend have become considerably poorer as a result. The same may apply to European monetary union as well. The problem is, however, that no West*ern politician* is courageous enough to give up the pretence that such trends can be controlled.

And not one of the West's leaders is ready to admit that the corollary of free trade in goods has been a free trade in politicians as well. The real rulers today are the chairmen of multi-media companies and multinational institutions, not the humble ministers who spent *what* was, by all accounts, an agreeable time at the WTO gathering in Singapore.

Time to get it right in Africa

EDITORIAL

FOR all its denials, the French government has undoubtedly taken sides in the conflict that has been smouldering for months in the Central African Republic. On January 5, Paris sent 2,000 French troops into the section of the capital, Bangui, held by mutinous sol*diers and it provided President* Ange-Félix Patassé with an unexpected reprieve.

The hope in certain French government circles is that Patassé will mend his ways. But there are others who have denounced his "tribalism" and regrettable habit of emptying the state coffers.

Patassé was elected by universal suffrage, but in the two years that he has been in office his management of state affairs has been marked by a series of blunders and scandals. The Central African Republic, for example, is the only country in the region that has *not yet re-established* relations with international financial institutions.

While jailing the supporters of the previous president, General André Kolingba, the "father of the nation" — as Patassé likes to style himself — distributed lavish hand-outs that were way out of proportion to the country's *actual* resources.

The death of two French soldiers at the hands of rebels on January 4 was something that had been both feared and expected. Since the beginning of the mutiny by about half of the army in November, French troops had been playing an ambiguous role.

They stepped in between the rebels and the section of the army that had remained loyal to the president. But the French move was criticised by both camps.

The rebels felt that French troops were preventing them *from toppling the president*, which was something they were clearly in a position to do. On the other hand, troops loyal to Patassé had long clamoured for a mopping-up operation by the French of the kind that finally took place on January 5.

What is France's strategy? Does it want to safeguard its biggest military base in Central Africa? Or is it interested in helping to put the Central African Republic on the road to development and democracy?

If it is the former, the French need do no more than put down the mutiny once and for all; and if the latter, they should seriously reconsider the terms of their presence in the country, which is as anachronistic as it is risky.

At a time when France, along with other nations, is helping some African countries to lay the foundations of democracy, its intervention in Bangui can only be interpreted as yet another illustration of bumbling policy-making. France must make up its mind whether it wants to con*tinue resorting to practices* based on patronage, or whether it is interested in hammering out a new approach to relations with African countries.

During the crisis in Rwanda, President Jacques Chirac solemnly declared that the French army would not engage in any further "unilateral actions" in Africa. The intervention in Bangui may once again have the effect of strengthening anti-French feeling among Africans, who resent the way a former colonial power continues to call the tune in countries such as the Central African Republic.

Somewhere between a total disengagement from Africa and Rambo-style diplomacy there must, surely, be a third way; one that will at last enable France to conduct its relations with African countries in a new spirit.

(January 7)

Mitterrand's plan to 'bow out in style'

Gérard Courtois

ONE book stands out of the pile of publications on François Mitterrand that have emerged since his death last year. It is Georges-Marc Benamou's Le Dernier Mitterrand, published by Plon, which gives a fascinating account of the former president's final cancer-stricken months.

In addition, it answers a question that was taboo at the time because Mitterrand made such a public show of his declining health: how was it that the man who in October 1994 said "on July 18 I began life as a recumbent figure" never for a moment thought of handing over the reins of power.

The answer becomes abundantly clear from Benamou's book. Two obsessions kept Mitterrand going during his final months at the Elysée: first, he was determined at all costs to see through a record-breaking second presidential term *of seven years.*

"After his second operation, he became fascinated with comparing how 'others' had left the political stage," Benamou remarks. Right up to his last day in office, Mitterrand repeatedly did little calculations to reassure himself that none of his predecessors had done "better" than him — including Marshal *Philippe Pétain.*

But what really kept the dying president alive was the possibility of influencing the course of history one last time and of "bowing out in style". In the autumn of 1994, Benamou noted for the first time the hostility that crept into Mitterrand's voice whenever he mentioned the then prime minister, Edouard Balladur.

"I can now see through Balladur," he reportedly said. "He uses the technique of the Ottoman strangler [a reference to Balladur's Levantine origins]. He's ever so gentle, worms his way in, neutralises you and then, when the right time comes, it's 'aargh!'"

Mitterrand had a soft spot for Jacques Chirac. He told Chirac in November 1994: "First, you must say you're standing for the presidency within a fortnight, otherwise you won't stand a chance; second, you must make your announcement outside Paris, of which you are mayor, and preferably somewhere of great symbolic importance." Chirac took the hint.

Shortly afterwards, Mitterrand declared to a congress of French mayors: "The head of state must love the French, and the French must feel he loves them." This swipe at Balladur created a "poisonous" atmosphere between the president and prime minister.

When Mitterrand realised in March 1995, at the height of the presidential election campaign, that he was no longer "the puppet-master" and that some of those close to him were urging people to vote for Chirac (instead of the Socialist Lionel Jospin), he was haunted, according to Benamou, by the nightmare of making his exit in a hail of abuse, and going down in history as "the impostor who had hijacked the left".

(January 7)



Nurses sway to an anti-government theme during a labour protest in Seoul last week PHOTO: PAUL BARKER

Strike leader says battle is for democracy

Philippe Pons in Seoul

"IT'S quite possible I may be arrested within the next few days," says Kwon Young-kil, president of the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), and the man *who triggered the wave of strikes in* South Korea.

Wearing a woollen cap and a black anorak, Kwon, aged 55, has the tranquil demeanour of someone who holds strong beliefs. A graduate of Seoul university, breeding ground of the South Korean élite, Kwon was an unlikely candidate to become a leading labour activist. From his tent behind Myongdong cathedral in central Seoul, he is currently engaged in a standoff with the government of Kim Young-sam, the country's first democratically elected president.

Kwon worked for many years as a reporter on the daily Seoul Shinmun. He was the paper's Paris correspondent from 1981 to 1988. "The government has been propogating the rumour that my time in France 'led me astray' and prompted me to become a trade union leader," he says with a laugh.

"In fact, like all Koreans of my generation, the reasons for my political commitment are to be found in the situation in our country from *1970 to 1980 [when South Korea* was ruled by hardline presidents-cum-generals, such as Park Chung-hee and Chun Doo-hwan]."

"I felt that journalism — whose aim is to support social justice and act as a mouthpiece for those who have been gagged — was not doing its job properly. I realised there was no point in continuing. The role of an intellectual in Korea must be to take action."

By the time he returned from France in 1988, South Korea was a changed country. The 1987 demonstrations had forced Chun's regime to make concessions, and the democratisation process was already under way. The straitjacket that had neutralised the labour movement was suddenly cast off, and 4,000 trade unions emerged within the space of three months. By then a prominent journalist, Kwon became both the union leader at Seoul Shinmun and president of the Press Federation. Eventually, in November 1995, he became head of the KCTU, which has not yet been recognised by the government despite its 300,000 members.

"For a long time, trade unions fought for salary increases and better working conditions," he says. "But we should look further than that and aim for an overall reform of South Korean society. The economy has certainly taken off in spectacular fashion, but it has not been accompanied by *comparable* progress in terms of social justice.

"The aim of the present strike is to get a repeal of the law that was passed on December 26 [which introduced more flexible working hours and made it easier for employers to lay off workers]. But the strike also has a deeper significance: it is the first example of trade unions fighting to prevent the parliamentary process from being derailed, and to raise the political consciousness of workers. The law we are challenging affects not only wage-earners but democracy at large."

Kwon does not deny that the South Korean economy has run into difficulties. "But it can't seriously be argued that labour costs alone have caused us to become less competitive. Other factors have to be taken into account — unbridled property speculation, high interest rates and outdated management methods."

Did he think the recent belt-tightening could be put down to South Korea's membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)?

"Partly, no doubt. But the government, which promised changes so South Korea could join the 'club of wealthy nations', has introduced labour legislation that contrasts with the general trend in the developed countries: the existence of several unions will not be recognised for five years, public sector employees and teachers cannot form unions, and organised labour is still not allowed to engage in political activities. The changes that have taken place in this last area are mere window-dressing."

Because the KCTU has not been officially recognised, Kwon's activities are illegal. He faces five charges, which include infringement of the law on public meetings, driving offences and trespassing on private property (on the occasion of a meeting on a university campus).

Because they know that they are likely to be arrested, the KCTU leaders have set up their headquarters in the courtyard of Myongdong cathedral.

"Myongdong is a safe haven, but it's also a symbol," Kwon says. "It was the starting point of the demo*cratic movement that eventually* overthrew the Chun regime in June 1987.

"President Kim has been sucked into a spiral of authoritarianism. He has already made one mistake by steamrolling this law through parliament. He may make another much more momentous one if he decides to use force against the unions."

(January 9)

Cutting through the collective fear

Anne Proenza in Apartado talks to Colombian women who are confronting terror in their community



ILLUSTRATION: PHILIPPE PRAQUIN

IN THE big White Book of Peace that lies open in the town hall of *Apartado, in northwest* Colombia, a visitor has written: "I love women because they are life."

In a tiny, stiflingly hot office, a small woman wearing a lightweight *dress and* black high-heeled shoes stands with her elbows on the counter and sighs into the telephone: "But colonel, he wasn't a trade-unionist or a political spokesman. He was just an ordinary official who represented no one, an ordinary young man. I feel so badly for our whole team. Surely they're not going to start killing my officials just to make me keep my mouth shut?"

The woman on the telephone is Gloria Isabel Cuartas Montoya, aged 45, mayor of Apartado. She is doing her best to put a brave face on things: one of her staff, a man in his twenties, was murdered the previous day. His killers tore out his tongue.

"It's only through the power of speech and common sense that we Colombians will ever be able to bring about the peace we all long for so much," she tells the person on the phone, a senior officer in the Colombian army. She goes on to explain the "Respect for Life" pact that she wants to see introduced.

The anonymous visitor who wrote "women . . . are life" had a point: from January to June 1996, 565 of the 692 people killed in the northwestern region of Uraba, where Apartado is located, were men. Montoya, elected mayor of the town in August 1995, says: "If I were a man, they'd already have killed me."

Other equally plucky women head the main institutions that have to deal with violence in Uraba. The co-ordinating officer of the local criminal investigation department is a woman, as are three of the five detective inspectors.

The job of "defender of the people", set up by Colombia's progressive 1991 constitution, is held by Maria Villegas, a spirited 30-year-old. "Usually people talk about human rights," she remarks in clipped tones. "But round here it's a better idea to talk about the right to life, because that is the right which is not respected."

Carmen Pilar, a lawyer who specialises in human rights cases, was appointed public prosecutor in Apartado last February. The two previous prosecutors, one of them a woman, had been murdered.

Pilar found the job particularly harrowing, and has just resigned. She could not help weeping as she read accounts of how peasant families had been tortured. "I was never able to come to terms with the collective irrational fear that hangs over this town," she says.

Uraba's economy relies almost entirely on its vast banana plantations. The region, which was largely ignored by the 1991 constitution, has apparently been written off by the Colombian government.

For the past 10 years it has been the scene of a ruthless power struggle between guerrillas, paramilitary groups, drug traffickers and the army. The civilian population has suffered most. Town hall sources say there are more than 25,000 refugees in the region. The 90,000-strong population of Apartado — the region's largest town and its administrative centre — includes more than 1,000 war widows and 4,500 orphans.

Apartado's residents have the grim, clenched expressions of people who know they may die tomorrow. They are unwilling to talk. They believe it is better not to voice their opinions or have friends, otherwise they may make enemies. According to official figures, 1,258 people in the region died violently in 1995, around 200 of them in mass murders.

The *banana industry, run* by wealthy landowners, most of whom live abroad, boomed in the sixties and began to export worldwide. The plantations attracted workers from all over Colombia.

But the guerrilla movement also thrived in Uraba. By the eighties the big landowners had had enough of the guerrillas' "revolutionary tax", extortion and kidnappings, and organised what they called "self-defence groups". These soon turned into battalions of paramilitaries that operated with the blessing of the regular army.

Then, as the drugs market took off, the traffickers made a deal with the paramilitaries to drive peasants off their land. There has now been a complete breakdown of law and order as warring factions fight over patches of land and for political power.

Every day, cases of torture and murder are given wide coverage in newspapers and on television. The scenario is depressingly familiar: banana workers — up to 30 at a time — are slaughtered, either on the bus taking them to the plantation, at their place of work, or in the working-class districts where they live. Sometimes a stray bullet hits a woman or a child.

Guerrillas kill workers and farmers if they think they have collaborated with the army. Paramilitaries kill them because they suspect them of supporting the guerrillas — or to carry out "social cleansing". Drug traffickers kill just to lay their hands on a tract of land. Others simply avenge the murder of their nearest and dearest.

Not surprisingly, farmers have fled the land, as have banana workers, who now refuse to live near the plantations. As one of them says: "We live in a state of extreme tension. We wake up every morning wondering whether it's going to be our last."

Villegas, who began in her job as "defender of the people" a little more than a year ago, says that 95 per cent of the complaints she receives *are to do with law and* order: "Most are the result of government negligence — or government connivance. People are afraid to complain to the authorities. *Everyone is scared.*"

Was she afraid? "Of course, like everyone else. But I firmly believe that those who commit acts of violence have a certain esteem for *women, an* esteem that shields us to some extent."

MARTA MAGNOLIA, aged 31, a police inspector, prays that "the soul of the murdered person will help her find the killer". She left her 13-month-old baby girl in Medellin so she could realise her lifelong dream of becoming a police detective.

She often works till midnight, and the little time she has for socialising she spends with work colleagues. "No one wants to go out with an inspector or someone working for the force," she says with a smile. "They're afraid of getting bumped off just because they've been seen with me."

For the same reason, Mayor Montoya knows she cannot have friends or lovers. Every day she learns of a new plot to kill her, yet she goes around without bodyguards and lives alone. "I could get myself protected, but then who's going to protect my neighbours? Anyway I don't like guns. The one time I was really scared was when I was all alone at home on Mothers' Day. There was a rather long power cut and I sat there in the dark not knowing what to do or who to telephone."

She has been nicknamed "Mother Courage" — she was educated by Carmelite nuns — and the "Napoleon of Uraba", because of her campaigning qualities. She is widely admired, and in 1995 was nominated "Woman of the Year" by the Colombian media.

Montoya is a thorn in the flesh of the government, currently going through one of its worst political crises. "I have a problem of legitimacy as a local authority," she says. "When I urgently need a response from central government, there's no one I can call in Bogotá as they're all busy with other things. As the country is rudderless, every institution withdraws into its shell and gets less and less involved."

Montoya gets up at 5am every morning and says *prayers for the* success of her "wonderful experience": "It helps me renounce my private life and devote myself to the community."

The *climate of terror* does not seem to have affected her extraordinary energy. She has gone before the European Parliament to plead her region's cause and sought the support of *non-governmental* organisations in Belgium, Switzerland and Britain. Pax Christi, a European NGO, has sent an appraisal mission. More recently, women from Burundi and Bosnia came to lend their support to the women of Uraba. The International Red Cross is active in the region, attempting to track down missing persons.

Every day Montoya sees Sister Caroline, a Dominican nun who drives around the countryside helping widows and orphans who suddenly find themselves without a job, a home or any form of social protection.

By deciding not to keep her mouth shut, the mayor of Apartado has managed to ensure that Uraba is not forgotten. The war has been raging for 10 years, but it is only recently that Colombians have realised that more people die every day in Uraba than anywhere else in the country.

However, despite the *efforts* being made on all sides, there still seems to be little sign of light at the end of the tunnel.

(January 5-6)

Millennium sparks race to beat the clock

Florence de Changy in Auckland

THOSE interested in being first past the post into the *21st century are aware* that the South Pacific is the place to be on December 31, 1999 (if one excludes the much chillier eastern tip of Siberia).

The inhabitants of the countless islands of Oceania scattered on either side of the International Date Line are in a position, if they wish, not only to see the first dawn and last dusk of each day, but also to live the same day twice over, without too much trouble.

With 2000 looming on the horizon, the South Pacific's quirky geographical characteristics could turn out to be a godsend. Its various nations are *already hard at work trying to* come up with the most tempting offer for those who want to enter the 21st century before anyone else in the world.

Candidates to be the first to greet January 1, 2000, can position themselves, for instance, on the west side of the date line, either on New Zealand's windswept Chatham, Bounty or Antipodes Islands, or closer to the equator amid Tonga's coconut trees. Then, after spending a long night moving from one millennium to the next and several hours of daylight in 2000, they can take a short plane ride back to Western Samoa (probably the westernmost point of human habitation on earth) on the other side of the date line, where they will be able to watch the sun go down on the previous day — and the previous century.

The fascinating though utterly artificial notion of being the first to see the dawn of the new mil*lennium has been of great inter*est in Japan for some years.

At the end of 1989, the Japanese television channel TV4 intended to broadcast live the first dawn of the nineties on the Chatham Islands. Unfortunately, these fishing islands located in the middle of the Roaring Forties, were swathed in thick fog on the night of December 31. As such conditions were hardly ideal to capture the first sunrise of the decade, the television channel used pictures it had taken of the previous day's much more telegenic dawn and passed them off as live footage.

The same thing could happen again in three years' time. Many contracts that guarantee exclusive access to the best-placed islands are already being negotiated.

But who will really see the sun before anyone else? It is a subject of some controversy. Several *islets claim the privilege.* Kiribati (formerly Gilbert and Ellice Islands) has succeeded in changing the international date line to standardise time across *the whole country.*

This means that people listening to Kiribati radio will no longer have to endure Sunday hymns two days running — first on the east side of the line, then on the west side the following day.

Tonga, which realised it was in danger of losing the battle of the clock, has come up with a subterfuge. The country is currently on Greenwich Mean Time minus 13 hours. By 1999 it will have adopted a new summer time that will put it at GMT minus 14, thus indisputably making it the first nation to enter *the* 21st century.

These little games can also be turned upside down: a person who, late on the last day of the *20th century, flies* from Tahiti, Western Samoa or Niue westwards to Wallis and Futuna, Tonga or New Zealand will, within a matter of a few hours, have gone *straight from* December 31, 1999, to January 2, 2000, thus neatly avoiding the end-of-millennium psychosis.

(January 1)

Le Monde
Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani

Mediation, not Muscle, Is the Way Ahead

COMMENT
Jim Hoagland

VEERING ALONG the erratic orbit it has pursued since the extinction of global communism, the hermit government of North Korea threatens war one day and embraces peace the next. These wild oscillations are the death rattle of a regime that admits defeat but is uncertain how to end its agony.

The latest moves indicate the regime may prefer to go out of business on a whimper, not a bang.

In late December North Korea suddenly apologized for sending a spy submarine into South Korean waters in September, and then accepted Washington's long-standing demand that talks about ending con*flict in the Korean Peninsula include* Seoul.

If sustained, these concessions point to a major diplomatic triumph for President Clinton and his advisers, *who endured sharp criticism for* sending fuel and food aid to North Korea after Pyongyang agreed in 1994 to freeze its secret development of a nuclear arsenal.

But the significance of regime-ending change in North Korea is much broader and deeper than America getting on the diplomatic scoreboard. The potential evolution of *Pyongyang* into a *nonthreat alters* the strategic basis of U.S. military policy globally, elaborated by Colin Powell at the end of the Cold War.

The United States has maintained a military establishment of about 1.5 million men and women and an annual budget in the $250 billion to $300 billion range since the Berlin Wall came down. The U.S. force structure has remained constant even as ex-Warsaw Pact nations beg to become members of NATO and Russia's military machine has come apart at the seams in Chechnya and elsewhere along Russia's ragged southern fringe.

The stated reason for keeping U.S. military readiness this high has been that America must be able to fight and win two near-simultaneous *major regional conflicts* — the "2 MRC" strategy, in Pentagon shorthand. As designed and explained by Powell when he was George Bush's chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *the United States had to be able to* deter North Korea from attacking south, even if Washington was engaged in putting Iraq or Iran back in its Persian Gulf box.

It was a brilliant device for doing the necessary while not saying the obvious. America's armed forces continued in fact to be structured to fight Russia if it again became an *aggressively hostile nuclear super*power. The 2 MRC strategy was above all an insurance policy, taken out against Russia but explained in terms of Iraq and North Korea, a senior U.S. commander acknowledged to me some months ago.

President Clinton simply renewed the global insurance policy in his first term. But events in North Korea, ex-Yugoslavia and Russia suggest that in his second term the president must answer two questions he could prudently defer until now: What capabilities are needed by the world's only military superpower to confront steadily declining global and regional threats? And what strategy explains how those capabilities will be used?

Communism is obviously no longer a mobilizing force either globally or regionally. The final legacy of its failure, in war and in peace, is on display in Belgrade and Pyongyang. Yugoslavia and North *Korea kept their governments*, military commands and economies out of Soviet control and adapted each to local conditions. But the communist regimes that led these two maverick satellites are now crashing, more slowly but no less conclusively than did the East European thug states. Their "use by" dates have expired.

China's Leninist gerontocracy still poses a regional threat to U.S. interests. And North Korea still has the capability to go out bloodily rather than evolve into a non-*belligerent state or let itself be* absorbed into a unified Korea dominated by Seoul.

But America faces a less threatening world than it did when Powell drew up the post-Cold War military insurance policy. U.S. strategic posture should be adjusted to reflect that changing reality.

A glimpse of some adjustments can be seen in a new paper written for Rand Corporation by three leading U.S. defense thinkers, Robert Blackwill of Harvard, Arnold Horelick of Rand and ex-senator Sam Nunn.

Entitled "Stopping the Decline in U.S.-Russian Relations," the paper identifies America's priority task as dealing with Russia's continuing weakness through diplomacy rather *than fresh military spending.* Without creative American initiatives, particularly on NATO expansion, the authors fear the more peaceful world now seemingly *within grasp will elude us again.* Then we will need all the insurance we can buy.

29 Killed in Michigan Plane Crash

Don Phillips and Edward Walsh

A COMMUTER plane slammed *into a field about 18 miles* southwest of Detroit Metropolitan Airport while preparing to land last week in deteriorating weather, killing 29 people, officials said.

Comair Flight 3272, flying as a Delta Connection link from Cincinnati to Detroit, burst into flames on impact and shredded into shards of metal near Ida, Michigan. Local television stations quoted witnesses as saying none of the 26 passengers and three crew members could have survived, and only body parts remained.

A Federal Aviation Administration official said the pilots of the twin-engine Embraer 120 had only routine conversations with *air-traffic* controllers during the flight and did not alert controllers of any problems before impact.

In an interview with WXYZ-TV *in Detroit, a witness* who was driving by the area just after the crash said the plane appeared to have "bounced over the fields and hit a tree" and that he could identify the tail section and "maybe a wing."

"There's nothing you could do," he said. "There was a fire and it was torn all to pieces. It was just pieces." The National Transportation Safety Board dispatched an investigative team to the site, led by board member John A. Hammerschmidt. The team will examine the wreckage, radar data, recorded air-traffic control conversations, and maintenance and other records to attempt to determine a cause.

Comair senior vice president Charles Curran told reporters that the airline bought the plane in 1992 and that its last heavy maintenance check was on November 20.

However, it is clear that the investigators will pay particular attention to weather data.

While initial speculation about accident causes is often wrong, pilots and other aviation professionals in the area noted that weather was terrible. The FAA's official weather report at the time of the crash showed layers of broken clouds, with light winds and 1½ mile visibility in snow and mist.

Investigators will want to determine whether the plane had entered icing conditions, in which sheets of ice can form on wings, tail surfaces and propellors, robbing the plane of lift and making control difficult.

If the crash does involve icing, it will be a blow to the FAA's program to prevent icing accidents, which grew out of the crash of an American Eagle ATR-72 turboprop aircraft at Roselawn, Indiana, in October 1994, in which 68 people died. That aircraft was in a holding pattern when ice began to form and eventually caused it to roll and dive into a field.

Hebron Row Spills Over Into the U.S.

Thomas W. Lippman



Palestinians play a board game outside a Hebron cafe last week. The stalemate over Israeli withdrawal has caused verbal thrusts and parries in Washington PHOTOGRAPH: NATI HARNIK

THE TENSION and anger that *have muscled out* optimism in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians spilled over into Washington last week in a parallel struggle for American public opinion.

Israel's ambassador to the United States, Eliahu ben-Elissar, accused Egypt of interfering in the stalled negotiations over an Israeli troop withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron *to stiffen the Pales*tinians' negotiating position.

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak appeared on the Charlie Rose television show to complain that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has broken his promise to abide by agreements negotiated by his predecessors. And Hanan Ashrawi, a senior official of Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority, accused U.S. mediator Dennis Ross of abandoning his neutrality and overstepping his mandate by offering a compromise that favored Israel.

The harmonious atmosphere of those Rose Garden signing ceremonies in President Clinton's first term seemed to have dissipated entirely. The immediate cause of the *unpleasantness* is the long stalemate in talks between Israel and the Palestinians over the conditions under which Israel will pull its troops out of Hebron, a mostly Arab town *with a small core of Jewish* settlers.

But representatives of both sides said, and independent analysts agreed, that the Hebron deal itself is virtually nailed down. The dispute now is about what happens next.

As former undersecretary of state Arnold Kanter wrote in a paper last week, "Hebron is stalemated because the Hebron negotiations are seen and are being used by both sides as a way to shape the future course and ultimate result of the entire peace process."

Netanyahu was elected last year on a platform opposed to the peace terms negotiated by his predecessors. He is seeking to delay from September 1997 until May 1999 the deadline *for Israel's military with*drawal from the occupied West Bank. Arafat and the Palestinians are insisting that the original date — fixed in the Oslo II agreement *signed at the* White House in September 1995 — was itself a compromise and must be adhered to.

Ross proposed that they split the difference and suggested a date in 1998. That prompted sharp criticism from Ashrawi.

"A mediator should offer compromise before an agreement is signed, not after," she told reporters at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

She said Ross was urging the Palestinians to accommodate Netanyahu because his fragile governing coalition might shatter if he accepted the original date.

She said that showed "bias" toward Israel, perhaps the first time in several years of Mideast negotia*tions that so prominent a participant* has accused Ross of partiality. "I find it objectionable personally that the Americans are trying to justify changes on the basis of domestic political problems for Netanyahu," said Ashrawi

State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns replied that her comments were "extraordinarily unwise." He said that if either side "truly believed that [Ross] was biased, they wouldn't have him at the talks."

Ben-Elissar says one of the main reasons the Palestinians are hanging tough is that Egypt — Israel's original and for many years only Arab peace partner — is egging them on.

"Egypt has not played a constructive role," said ben-Elissar, a former Israeli ambassador to Egypt.

Just as a Hebron agreement appeared to be in hand, he said, Egypt*ian officials went on television to* say the Palestinians would not sign unless Israel accepted Arafat's position on a security role for the Palestinians at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, also site of a mosque sacred to Muslims. Egypt has consistently urged Arafat not to yield on key points, he said.

"What do you expect Arafat to do, be less Palestinian than the Egyptians?" ben-Elissar said.

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Fujimori and Rebels Remain Poles Apart

Gabriel Escobar in Lima

PRESIDENT Alberto Fujimori said last week that his government has had only three direct conversations with the rebel group holding hostages at the Japanese ambassador's residence, an acknowledgment that negotiations to end the 24-day standoff have hardly advanced.

In an interview, Fujimori also said that one country has offered asylum to the rebels and that others may be approached as part of a broader strategy to find a resolution. He said this option would be worked out in conjunction with the Japanese government but insisted that any discussion of asylum would hinge on the rebels' releasing the remaining hostages and surrendering their weapons.

Guerrillas from the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) burst into an elegant party at the residence on December 17 and seized hundreds of hostages. Since then, the rebels have released all but 74 — those remaining include Fujimori's brother, Pedro — and the siege has settled into a grim routine. Fujimori's remarks, revealing how little real negotiation has gone on between the government and the rebels, suggested how far apart the two sides may be.

Fujimori emphasized that there have been no talks at all with the rebels in about a week, and added that he could not predict whether the crisis would last three months or more.

Despite this lack of contact, however, Fujimori for the first time provided details of a governmental proposal to use an independent commission as a way of finding an "exit" for the rebels once they surrender. He said this "commission of guarantors" would be made up of three to five people — not necessarily limited to Peruvians — and that each would have to be approved by both the government and the rebel leader, Nestor Cerpa Cartolini.

Dressed in a blue pinstripe suit, looking relaxed and often smiling, Fujimori in the 45-minute interview lived up to his reputation as a president who approaches the affairs of state with the precision of a mathematician, which is what he was trained to be. Alone in a cluttered office — several paintings he has received as gifts were leaning on chairs, and boxes lined the walls — the president seemed at once isolated but in complete control.

How Fujimori has been handling himself has been the subject of much speculation, not only among foes — who grudgingly admire his unyielding stance — but also among foreign diplomats, who have wondered how this hard-to-read leader is making his choices. From the onset of the crisis, this descendant of Japanese immigrants has spent almost all of his time holed up in the presidential palace.

"As far as the negotiations, everyone knows that mine is a hard position," Fujimori said. "That has not changed. I continue, with prudence and with rationality, and also with a lot of realism." Asked what would happen if the government learned that a hostage had been harmed, Fujimori said: "In that case, the logic with which we are working will change completely."

Apparently intent on showing how much in command he is, Fujimori at one point halted the interview, picked up the telephone and ordered that his chief mediator in the crisis, Domingo Palermo, be summoned. Palermo called back and Fujimori began by saying he wanted to update The Washington Post. Fujimori's end of the conversation, in its entirety, went like this: "What did you talk about? . . . Yes . . . Uh huh . . . Nothing else but that? . . . How much time? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Perfect . . . The conversation was fluid? . . . Uh huh . . . Yes . . . Perfect . . . Thank you . . . Goodbye."

Afterward, Fujimori reported that Palermo and Cerpa — who had a brief conversation by two-way radio this morning — had discussed the possibility of resuming talks soon. But even if the communication revives over the next few days, all indications are that the crisis will take weeks and possibly months to resolve.

Fujimori appeared prepared to handle a long siege and said he was not worried that a lengthy crisis would give political opponents an opportunity to attack his administration, as some here are predicting.



China Vetoes Guatemalan Peace Force

John M. Goshko

THE DRIVE to end 36 years of civil war in Guatemala suffered a setback last week when China retaliated against the Guatemalan government's support for Taiwan and vetoed the use of U.N. peacekeepers to supervise the recent peace agreement in the Central American nation.

China was the lone member of the 15-nation Security Council to vote against a U.S.-sponsored resolution calling for the dispatch of 155 military observers to oversee compliance with the accord signed on December 29 by Guatemalan President Alvaro Arzu and leftist rebel leaders.

The agreement calls for an end to the conflict, during which more than 100,000 people have been killed and 40,000 more have disappeared. If fully implemented, it would see Guatemala follow Nicaragua and El Salvador in ending the civil wars that dominated Central America in the 1970s and 1980s.

The opposing factions had looked to the United Nations, which played an important role in bringing about the agreement, to ensure compliance with key provisions such as disarming the rebel forces and ending atrocities against the Indian majority.

Defeat of the plan for U.N. observers means that there will be no impartial force to assume this task.

Prompting Beijing's action was its insistence that Taiwan is an integral province of China and its policy of opposing any country that maintains ties with Taiwan. Guatemala is one of fewer than 30 countries in Central America and Africa that recognize Taipei instead of Beijing, primarily because they receive substantial aid from Taiwan.

As one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, China has the power of veto. It exercised that power last week after extensive negotiations that included mediation by the United States and other countries friendly to Guatemala failed to induce the Arzu government to make conciliatory gestures satisfactory to Beijing.

It was the first Chinese veto of a council resolution since 1972. Until now, the mere threat of a Chinese veto has been sufficient to force an offending country to make concessions. Last year, for example, China used a threat to block a U.N. peacekeeping force for Haiti to cause that nation to put the brakes on its developing ties with Taiwan.

The Chinese were especially incensed by Guatemala's four years of support in the U.N. General Assembly for Taiwan's bid to win U.N. membership as a separate country. Further aggravating the situation was Guatemala's action in inviting a Taiwanese representative to the December 29 signing of the peace agreement in Guatemala City.

"We are not going to change our friendship with Taiwan," Pedro Miguel Lamport, the Guatemalan ambassador in Washington, said before the vote.

He said his government had sent a letter to the Security Council, stating that it did not intend to intervene in any country's internal affairs. But, he stressed, that was as far as Guatemala intends to go in making a gesture toward Beijing.

Record Unemployment Sparks Fears of German Unrest

William Drozdiak in Berlin

THE GERMAN government last week said that unemployment has surged to the highest level since World War II. The announcement triggered warnings from economists and opposition leaders that Europe's most severe jobs crisis since the 1930s could trigger a fresh outbreak of strikes and social turmoil.

The report offered little hope that the continent's economic powerhouse would be able to pull out of its tailspin in the near future. Germany is saddled with some of the highest labor costs and most expensive social programs in the world, which have dragged down its competitiveness in the global economy.

In the western part of the country, onerous taxes have depressed investments and slowed down the introduction of modern technology. In the east, the infusion of $700 billion in transfers from the west has replaced a decrepit communist infrastructure but failed to generate jobs. In some of the more desolate regions, half of the active population is out of work.

At the same time, austerity measures designed to slash state deficits and meet the requirements for a European currency by 1999 have further soured public opinion on the idea of abandoning the mark in favor of an untested Euro. Surveys show only 31 percent of Germans back the plan, while a hefty majority fears it will erode their living standards.

Seeking to repel the tide of bad news by putting a brave face on Germany's plight, Chancellor Helmut Kohl said he discerned "positive perspectives" in a weakening Mark that should boost exports and help the government achieve its goal of cutting unemployment in half by the end of the decade.

While acknowledging that the present situation was "not at all acceptable", Kohl said he was confident that the trend could be reversed. "I think the chances for recovery rest on a solid basis," he told a press conference. "I see no reason to give up. Creating jobs is still possible."

But Bernhard Jagoda, head of the federal labor office, said the economic data show no signs of improving. He said the number of jobless workers will surpass 4.5 million — or 11 percent of the labor force — by the end of the month, and undoubtedly climb in subsequent months because economic prospects look so anemic.

Economists said that the freezing weather in Germany and much of Europe for the last few weeks could hamper the construction industry so much that the economy would contract at least until the spring.

And some politicians and economists are predicting that unless Germany's inflation-conscious central bank softens its reluctance to cut interest rates further to stimulate the economy, the country's vaunted social consensus could snap.

"Mass unemployment is threatening social stability in Germany," according to Ernst Schwandhold, economics spokesman for the opposition Social Democrats. "The government has no idea of what to do and is only making vague promises that will never be fulfilled."

With employers arguing that any more wage concessions will price them out of the world market, German union leaders have been contemplating a massive round of strikes to press their demands for more jobs, shorter working hours and secure pensions.

In the east, resentment has reached a flash point over tens of thousands of jobs lost when former state enterprises were closed in the name of modernization. Kurt Biedenkopf, the Christian Democratic premier in Saxony, the largest state in the former East Germany, said recently that violent protests could soon explode in Dresden and other cities where joblessness now exceeds 40 percent.

Germany's weak economy has spawned unprecedented political tensions within the governing alliance that Kohl has headed for 14 years. The junior partner Free Democrats have threatened to bolt unless the government agrees to substantial tax cuts, including the abolition of a 7.5 percent solidarity tax to pay for aid to the east. But Kohl insists that no tax package can be approved until new ways are found to cover the shortfall in revenues.

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Japanese Put Bite on Officials' Free Lunch

Taxpayers are hitting back at bureaucrats accused of squandering money, write **Kevin Sullivan** and **Mary Jordan** in Tokyo

MORE THAN 100 times in recent months, a Tokyo city government budget officer has answered his front door to find unwanted deliveries waiting — hemorrhoid cream, wigs, applications for a marriage counseling service, expensive watches — up to eight items a day, all cash on delivery.

Police say the mail-order harassment is the work of an angry taxpayer forging the bureaucrat's signature to order the nuisance goods. The motive: The bureaucrat is a defendant in a lawsuit filed by Tokyo residents angry that city officials squandered more than $7 million between 1993 and 1995 to wine and dine each other. The plaintiffs want their tax money back; the prankster wants to make it personal.

"That's funny! I'm glad this person did that; I hope this guy learned a lesson," said Ayako Hanazono, a Tokyo kindergarten teacher, reflecting public disgust and an aggressive new civic activism toward bureaucratic corruption.

Things like this used to be unheard of here. For decades, Japan's career public servants were considered the best and the brightest — only the top graduates of the top universities went into government service. The bureaucracy here has far more power than elected politicians, so public servants have become accustomed to an unusual level of respect — and the dinners, drinks, gifts, golf outings and other perks that somewhere along the way became part of their jobs.

But in the last year, public respect for bureaucrats has nose-dived with a series of scandals and coverups. A recent Mainichi Shimbun newspaper poll found that only 10 percent of respondents thought government bureaucrats seek to fulfill the public good.

Unprecedented investigations by citizens' groups have disclosed a torrent of sleaze. It is impossible to pick up a newspaper in Japan these days without finding a story about bureaucratic corruption, from insider stock deals at the elite Finance Ministry to lavish dinners for the officials at city halls across the nation.

An investigation by the Yomiuri newspaper disclosed that officials in 20 of Japan's 47 prefectural governments squandered more than $123 million last year on officials entertaining other officials, fabricating or padding business trips or hiring bogus staff.

Nine prefectures have forced officials to return money. Last month, more than 2,300 current and former Tokyo city employees, including a former governor, paid back a spending bill exceeding $7 million — in the case that prompted the mail-order harassment of the city budget official.

On Christmas Day, the mayor of Nagoya and other city officials were ordered to repay more than $9 million of taxpayer money they squandered; the mayor of Toyohashi was given a two-year suspended prison term for taking bribes; and Nobuharu Okamitsu, the former top bureaucrat in the national Health Ministry, was indicted.

Okamitsu, who had resigned in November, was charged with accepting more than $530,000 in bribes from a nursing home contractor in return for $3 million in contracts. The alleged bribes included free use of a car and house, free renovation of his condominium and a golf club membership worth more than $110,000.

Corruption among Japan's politicians and bureaucrats is not new, but the public's aggressive response is. People once accepted government greed and graft with a shrug of resignation. Japan has always had a shortage of advocates for consumers and taxpayers; a Ralph Nader-style crusader has never caught on in a nation accustomed to accepting whatever its leaders dish out. But now, with the national economy leaner and personal budgets tighter, an energized public is demanding more accountability.

In a display of civic activism that the Asahi Evening News has described as "a milestone in the history of local government," citizens' groups have filed lawsuits all over the country demanding the return of squandered funds.

In one case in Niigata prefecture, four local bureaucrats spent about $9,000 on an evening's entertainment for nine national government officials. Local officials traditionally lavish entertainment on national officials who dole out money for public works and other local projects. Even $1,000 per person for dinner apparently seemed acceptable to the bureaucrats — until the public spotlight was turned on.

Masaru Sato, head of the group that sued in Niigata Prefecture, said that people are fed up with bureaucrats brazenly spending millions on entertainment. "Arrogance is part of it," Sato said. "Their mentality is that even though there is a red light, if we all cross the street as a group there is nothing to be scared of."

The public outcry over bureaucratic corruption has reached Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, who called the recent spate of scandals "shameful" and issued a rare scolding of government workers when he addressed parliament in November.

As a result of the outcry, the national and local governments are passing tougher expense-account regulations as well as freedom-of-information laws to allow taxpayers greater access to bureaucrats' spending records. Critics say the regulations do not go far enough — that many local governments still refuse to disclose how public money is spent on entertainment, for example.

The service industry has pleaded with some local governments not to be too strict. Some restaurants and bars near local and national government centers say public scrutiny is killing business. And the bureaucrats themselves are begging for understanding.

Japanese culture is built on personal relationships, and the ties are lubricated with liquor and food. Japanese corporations spent about $48 billion last year on food, drink, golf club memberships and other expenses, according to figures released last month by the National Tax Administration. Bureaucrats say it would be unfair, even if it were possible, to exclude them suddenly from the expense-account culture.

"I think it is outrageous to have government officials hosting dinners involving geishas," said one high-ranking bureaucrat, who asked not to be identified. "But to deprive them of the initiative of hosting some eating and drinking occasions within the limits of common sense, I think that is wrong."

Bureaucrats generally earn less than their peers in private industry, even though they may have had far more distinguished academic backgrounds. The average 45-year-old national government bureaucrat in a middle manager's job earns $100,000 a year. While that is higher than a counterpart in the United States, the money doesn't go as far; in Japan, a cup of coffee can easily cost $6. The average condominium in greater Tokyo is small, about 690 square feet, and costs about $363,000.

Even the highest-ranking government bureaucrats generally live in modest government-owned housing. This imbalance causes resentment among some bureaucrats, who feel that their elite status entitles them to a decent expense account. "If you destroy the whole process of bureaucrats joining the accepted practices of Japanese society, that goes too far," said the government worker. "If you push it too hard, clearly the best people will not be attracted to government service."

For Sato, the citizen activist, the bureaucrats' lament is lame: "It's like they want to justify stealing."

"These things are becoming quite normal to them," said Mitsuo Oyama, 63, who owns an import-export business. "It is really scary that many of them don't feel guilty about it."

Rainforest Theme Is A Winner

Anthony Faiola

PAST THE Magic Mushroom juice bar, not far from the animatronic talking trees and the fake jungle mist, around the corner from the live macaws and the plastic palm fronds and rows of themed merchandise, lies the entrance to the Rain Forest Cafe.

And if that new McLean, Virginia, restaurant can't satisfy your appetite for the rain forest, why, just look around. Last summer, beverage maker Mistic Brands Inc. began quenching the thirst of parched tree-huggers with a new juice line called Rain Forest Nectars. And for the environmentally minded contractor, several lumber companies in California are now marketing ethically chopped tropical rain forest timber.

There's Ben & Jerry's Rain Forest Crunch Ice Cream, Tropical Source's Chocolate Chips, rain forest-themed cosmetics, Swiss Vanilla and Extracts of the Rain Forest shampoo, and more.

Indeed, while the natural rain forest might be disappearing rapidly from the globe's Southern Hemisphere, in the United States the business version is proliferating. U.S. companies have caught jungle fever, bottling and selling, packaging and re-packaging just about anything with a rain forest theme, capitalizing on the apparent soft spot in the American consumer's heart for protecting habitats — and for preserving enough oxygen for future shoppers to breathe.

Jungle fever . . . while the natural rain forest is disappearing rapidly from the Southern Hemisphere, in the U.S. the business version is booming · PHOTOGRAPH: EMILY BUCHANAN

The rain forest theme is a branch of the 1990s' green marketing movement, in which companies stress that their products are environmentally friendly. Today, the rain forest image is worth more than $100 million in annual sales in America, and with an array of recently launched products, analysts expect the number to grow rapidly.

The theme "taps into consumer interest in the environment that's become big since the early 1990s," said Jason Clay, a former marketing executive who helped launch several environment-related products in the early 1990s. People often feel they're making a positive impact on the environment when they purchase these products."

Federal officials say that's not always the case. Earlier this year, the Federal Trade Commission charged Benckiser Consumer Products, maker of EarthRite household cleaners, with falsely claiming that a portion of its profits was being channeled to rain forest preservationists. Benckiser settled the case.

Some environmentalists, meanwhile, argue that companies that do make donations do so only in token amounts.

"There is unquestionably rampant greenwashing going on," said Randall Hayes, executive director of the San Francisco-based Rain Forest Action Network. "I think these companies should be held up to some sort of public accountability. If they're selling the rain forest, they should be asked to produce information on how much they're actually doing to preserve it."

Many companies concede that the main point is to make a buck.

Take the Rain Forest Cafe, created by marketing entrepreneur Steve Schussler. Today, the company operates six locations, including sites at the Walt Disney World Village in Kissimmee, Florida, and the one in McLean that opened in September. During its most recent quarter, the company posted profits of $15.7 million, up from $3.1 million during the same period last year.

"We're in this for business purposes," said Schussler, who launched the idea after turning his home into a mock rain forest to convince investors the concept could take root. "We call it the . . . 'E's' — entertainment . . . environment and earning a return on investment."

The company does not donate money from profits to preservation groups, but it does donate several thousand dollars a year from coins thrown into the wishing wells at the restaurants. Its staff also conducts rain forest "educational programs" at neighborhood schools.

Some companies do provide money directly from profits to rain forest projects. In June, Mistic Brands launched a line of rain forest-themed juices, hoping to capture a larger segment of the 12- to 34-year-old market — the one, experts say, for which environmental themes appeal most. As part of the launch, the company agreed to pay to the Nature Conservancy 10 cents per case of beverage sold, for a minimum of $50,000 this year and a minimum of $235,000 over several years.

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The Fat of the Land

Jonathan Yardley

LOSING IT: America's Obsession with Weight And the Industry That Feeds on It
By Laura Fraser
Dutton. 328pp. $24.95

LAURA FRASER is here to say, to thee and me: Lighten up! Obsessing about weight, she says, is pointless, counter-productive and self-destructive. That she is absolutely right makes it not a bit easier to believe her, for her message runs contrary to everything else our culture would have us believe.

On the question of weight as on so many other matters, America is terminally weird. On the one hand it insists that only thin is genuinely beautiful, a message reinforced by mass media that fawn over pencil-thin female models and impossibly trim male movie stars and athletes as well as by a food industry that has turned "lo-cal" and "fat free" into cash cows. Yet on the other hand the dominant ingredients of the American diet are high in calories and fat, and the weight of the average American bulks ever larger year after year after year. On the one hand we talk incessantly about weight and spend staggering amounts of money trying to get rid of it, yet on the other hand we are probably the fattest nation on earth. Go figure.

Fraser is less interested in figuring than in reporting. She is better on the whats than on the whys, but that is a forgivable shortcoming in what is otherwise a sound and informative tour through the darkest recesses of what she calls Dietland, the basic character of which she defines at the outset:

"Nearly half of all American women, and a quarter of all men, diet . . . Most diets, several studies have shown, don't work for at least nine out of ten people, who will just regain the weight. (People who lose weight on their own and aren't counted in medical studies seem to do slightly better at keeping the pounds off.) Still, we keep trying, and collectively we spend an estimated $34 to $50 billion a year on dieting — that's about the gross national product of Ireland — which comes down to roughly $500 a year per dieter. Despite our efforts, we are still gaining weight: In the past decade, the average American adult has put on eight pounds."

The ideal of thinness, as Fraser and many others have pointed out, is relatively recent. The Victorians celebrated the well-padded physique, and the robber barons measured their success at their waistlines. But around the turn of the century, an evolutionary chain began that ran from the plump Lillian Russell to the athletic Gibson Girl to the boyish flapper to the "ubiquitous ideal" of Barbie, with "proportions impossible for ordinary women to attain." For all Americans, but for women most especially, thinness became at once mandatory and elusive.

The industry that soon settled down to cater to and profit from this enduring contradiction is all too well-known to most of us, but Fraser provides an illuminating tour. She presents a parade of diet doctors and gurus, from Jack LaLanne to Herman Tarnower to Dean Ornish to Susan Powter; she explores the underworld of diet fraud, with its "long history . . . full of colorful American character types: confidence men, hucksters, shady doctors and fly-by-night entrepreneurs"; she examines the corporate interests that roll out diet and fat-free food or food "products," though she is oddly silent about aspartame; she visits (and enrolls in) some of the more notable commercial diet groups, Weight Watchers and Jenny Craig among them; and she explores the scientific, academic and industrial world of "bariatric physicians" and "obesity research."



ILLUSTRATION: SARAH ALBEE

It is hardly a pretty picture. The sum of all this labor is a system determined upon "proving that everyone is at an increased risk of dying early if they aren't super-thin, frightening people into going on starvation diets to reach an improbable weight, and ignoring reams of studies that demonstrate there are much more sophisticated ways of looking at health risks." Even among relatively serious and responsible people who know that diets simply do not work — at least not diets as the interconnected interests of commercial clubs and food products define them — she finds a prevailing assumption that, as one reformed dieter put it, "dieting doesn't work, but we don't want to discourage people from doing it."

This is hypocritical indeed, but it is a clumsy way of saying that even if the stereotypical American "diet" is a fraud, the question of weight is far from unimportant. What Fraser calls "the new paradigm about weight" — it "encourages people to stop dieting, to develop lifelong healthy eating and exercise habits instead, and to accept whatever weight they end up with" — is admirable, but one need only look at the human evidence all around us to understand that it is a paradigm still in search of a following.

Still, the essential drift of Fraser's reportage and her argument is on target. Dieting as most Americans practice it does them far more harm than good. Yo-yo weight shifts are generally believed in responsible quarters to put the body at greater risk than steady if moderate overweight, and many of the food products low in fat and calories are poor eating and inadequate nutrition.

In what is generally a sensible and balanced presentation, Fraser skips too quickly over one important element. However fraudulent and exploitative many inhabitants of Dietland may be, most of them could not have got where they are without the eager cooperation of the press. Most of these media people know as little about nutrition and biology as the rest of us, but this does not prevent them from acting as messengers of false hope and inner panic. The media worship thinness and shamelessly promote impossible means of achieving it. In Dietland, they are as much at fault as anyone else.

Hardcovers

Non-Fiction

Imaginary Animals, edited by Charles Sullivan (Abrams, $22.95)

SULLIVAN'S book is ostensibly aimed at young readers, but adults will likely find much to enjoy here. Of course Sullivan simply may be referring to the young in spirit. The author explores the idea of animals who live only in the imagination, as described in the musings of poets and painters. Sullivan, an associate dean at Georgetown University, charted similar waters in a previous book, Imaginary Gardens, and knows whereof he speaks. The world unfolding on Sullivan's pages is multicolored and whimsical, enhanced by his imaginative pairings of poems and paintings. For example, Richard Wilbur's dream journey on horseback is accompanied perfectly by Marc Chagall's "The Poet Reclining," rendered in muted tones.

The Letters Of Matthew Arnold, Volume I: 1829-1859, edited by Cecil Y. Lang (University Press of Virginia, $60)

WHO'D have thought the sober-minded Victorian poet and critic Matthew Arnold, believer in the edifying power of liberal education and high culture, possessed a sense of humor? This volume of letters suggests that the author of "Dover Beach" — the poem [illegible] known to every schoolboy — had a rather dry wit. Writing to a friend who was off shooting birds, a [illegible]-year-old Arnold commented that he'd given up hunting himself: "I shall never look along the [illegible] tube again, I expect; however [illegible] will be no great blessing for the brute creation, as I never used to [illegible] them."

Marginalized In The Middle, by Alan Wolfe (University of Chicago Press, $27.50)

WHAT role should the social critic play in America in the 1990s? That question informs this collection of essays by a leading social critic. Wolfe begins with a look back at the so-called golden age of American social criticism in the 1950s and '60s, when social critics considered themselves social scientists, and goes on to examine how social criticism tackles today's pressing social issues (race, gender, welfare, immigration, education). It argues that social critics nowadays exhibit an unfortunate tendency to put politics ahead of honest intellectual endeavor. Ultimately the book is a plea for a return to liberal (not leftist) thinking, an insistence on the value of "social criticism beyond politics."

American Discoveries: Scouting the First Coast-to-Coast Recreational Trail, by Ellen Dudley and Eric Seaborg (Mountaineers Books, $24.95)

THIS book records the 5,000 mile trek Dudley and Seaborg *undertook to* map out the American Discovery Trail, "stretching from ocean to ocean across twelve states and sampling some of the best scenery, history, and culture the country had to offer." The authors, now married and living in the Washington, D.C., area, devote as much space to the colorful characters they encountered as they do to their trail-blazing efforts.

The Decade That Won't Go Away

Lewis L. Gould

OUR WAR: What We Did in Vietnam and What It Did to Us
By David Harris
Times Books. 191pp. $21

REASSESSING THE SIXTIES: Debating the Political and Cultural Legacy
Edited by Stephen Macedo
Norton. 320pp. $25

MAKING PEACE WITH THE '60s
By David Burner Princeton University Press. 322pp. $29.95

THE 1960s are now the dark bloody ground of American history. Conservatives regard the decade as the time when the nation went irrevocably wrong in pursuit of big government, the Great Society, feminism and affirmative action. Liberals see it as an era of overdue sexual liberation, antiwar protest, and civil rights demonstrations that made for a better and more equitable society.

The cultural wars that raged 30 years ago still resonate in these three books that reexamine the big issues of the 1960s. Each of them, whatever its conclusions about the decade, assumes that liberalism dominated the period and that conservatives were a minor element. That makes these books valuable documents of the intensity of feeling that still surrounds the 1960s, but it leaves important aspects of those years unexplored.

The most impassioned book is Our War, David Harris's combination memoir-jeremiad about Vietnam. A leading antiwar activist, Harris remains convinced that the Vietnam War represented a monumental historical mistake, but two elements lessen the force of his polemic. First, some of the specific episodes he recalls are revisited from Dreams Die Hard, his 1982 book on peace activist Allard Lowenstein and his friend-turned-murderer David Sweeney. Second, he interprets Vietnam policymaking with little reference to the historical literature on Lyndon Johnson and his administration that offers a less demonic picture of why Vietnam occurred. Harris is also selective in his targets; for instance, John F. Kennedy's part in the Vietnam quagmire gets only glancing attention.

In searching for the historical roots of the national tragedy in Vietnam, Harris concludes that John Wayne was a key element because of the masculine bravado he inspired in American society. "He was just a movie actor," says Harris, "but I cannot imagine the war without him." As an explanation this is at best simplistic, but it touches on a truth that Harris otherwise overlooks. Many of the attitudes that Harris blames for Vietnam arose from a basic national conservatism that limited how policymakers could respond to the perceived Communist threat from North Vietnam. The war in Southeast Asia is only a background theme in Reassessing The Sixties, a collection of essays edited by Stephen Macedo. Instead, the major issues covered are changes in gender roles, the nation's universities and race relations. The conservative authors who are represented — Harvey Mansfield, Jeremy Rabkin and Walter Berns — are more interested in refighting the 1960s than in reappraising the impact of the period. Other contributors, such as Alan Wolfe on the universities and Randall Kennedy on black power, take a more measured tone that attempts some degree of historical perspective. Several of the essays, such as those by Martha Nussbaum and Anita LaFrance Allen, infuse a personal dimension that will make them valuable to readers seeking insights on how the 1960s changed the attitudes of white and African-American women.

Like Harris's book, however, Reassessing The Sixties treats the decade as something experienced primarily by those on the left. Sheldon Wolin's essay on "post-modern conservatism" and the 1960s is more about how present-day conservatives view the decade than what the right was doing during the years of the Great Society. For all the value of these essays in recapturing the spirit and contentiousness of the time, they seem incomplete and historically removed from the complexity of the decade.

David Burner, a distinguished historian of American liberalism, provides a better overview in Making Peace With The '60s. The book reflects Burner's scholarly strengths: He has mastered the large volume of recent historical writing on the period, has thought carefully about the major issues, and makes some fascinating connections among the civil rights movement, the Beats, and the student rebellions in the middle of the decade.

The book is freshest and strongest in the areas outside of politics. The chapter on the evolution of the civil rights from nonviolence to black power is very well done, while the material on the student revolutions pulls together the experiences of many campuses into a lucid narrative. On the other hand, the treatment of John F. Kennedy is overly kind, and the discussion of the Great Society and the Johnson administration's involvement in Vietnam covers familiar ground.

As the 1960s recede and the baby boomers age, it may be possible to look at that troubled decade in a more calm and measured way. For the present, the social and cultural passions that stirred the United States from the end of Dwight Eisenhower's term to the onset of Watergate seem as intense as ever. Anyone wishing to understand why the 1960s have not achieved historical rest will find these three books stimulating and *thought-provoking* guides to a period whose divisive and corrosive effects can be seen in the recent presidential election.

Prodigal son returns to the Apple corps

For nerds, it's as if John Lennon had come back and reunited the Beatles, says **Karlin Lillington**

TWO STORIES have dominated the news in northern California over the past few weeks, and both involve acts of God. One is the catastrophic flooding in the upper half of the state. The other is the return, after 11 years, of *co-founder Steven P Jobs to Apple* Computer. Front-page headlines in San Jose and San Francisco blared the pre-Christmas announcement that Apple had paid $400 million for NeXT, Jobs's software company. The impending return of the prodigal *father had online chat rooms* sizzling and provided plenty of cubicle-chat for the computer minions working their anti-social hours up and down Silicon Valley.

Few had seen the announcement coming. Apple had been talking to Be Inc, *another software developer* run by one of the company's former stars, Jean-Louis Gassée. The talk was about acquiring Be's operating system to rejuvenate the geriatric Mac OS, and analysts expected Apple to announce a merger at last *week's Macworld Expo in San Francisco*, the annual Mac lovefest.

According to a NeXT employee, Apple took a look at the NeXT operating system, OpenStep, to gain some bargaining power against Be. But then it came back for a second look, and clinched a deal so fast that even NeXT employees were left blinking in astonishment. "On Tuesday [December 17], we were called in and told: 'This is just a rumour because of the Be deal'. By Friday it was done," he said. The initial contact was made by a gutsy NeXT manager — behind Jobs's back.

Last week in San Francisco, Apple revealed the details of its strategy, promising to deliver "significant and regularly scheduled upgrades to the current Mac OS while accelerating development of a new and advanced operating system". The new operating system, known as Rhapsody and due to be delivered to developers later this year and to customers within 12 months, will be compatible with existing Mac software. Gil Amelio, Apple's chairman and chief executive, also announced the release of Mac OS 7.6, an update of the current operating system.

Steve Jobs (right), back after a decade, with Apple's chairman Gil Amelio PHOTOGRAPH: GROUP/SIPA PRESS

The event began spectacularly with a trailer for Independence Day, in which arch nerd Jeff Goldblum saves the world by hacking into alien spaceships from a Macintosh PowerBook. Goldblum then stepped on to the stage to introduce Amelio. To an expectant star-studded auditorium of several thousand, the Apple boss made a master showman's pitch for the survival of the only computer to have a fan club of millions. Over two and a half hours, twice the scheduled length, a casually dressed Amelio brandished impressive Mac products and forthcoming Mac features, demonstrated by top executives from the likes of Netscape, Corel, Sun Microsystems and even Microsoft. Peter Gabriel showed off a rock video produced on a Mac.

In an extraordinary display, Amelio bared Apple's soul, offered *mea culpas*, and promised a more open relationship with software developers and customers. Both Apple founders, Jobs and Steve Wozniak, received standing ovations. Developers in the audience "ooh-ed and aah-ed" as Jobs put the NeXT operating system through its paces. "We're going to provide relevant, compelling solutions that customers can only get from Apple," he said.

For the computing world, it's as if John Lennon came back and decided to reunite the Beatles. The boyish Jobs, aged 41, even looks vaguely Lennonish. A charismatic visionary, Jobs also acquired a reputation for arrogance and a management style best avoided by the weak of heart.

But at least Jobs has never been accused of being dull. In a world dominated by putty-toned machines and by what one Valley programmer calls "the MicroSoft Borg collective", Jobs is as colourful as Apple's rainbow icon. "Steve's return is very, very important," said an Apple employee. "What has this man to offer? Just try to think of another company with 5 per cent market share where a spokesman gets as much attention."

Along with the mercurial Jobs, Apple acquires NeXT assets that enable it to tick off a number of items on its corporate wish list: a robust operating system, OpenStep; an array of Web technologies; plenty of applications; and an established customer base. But Apple also needs a dynamic new approach to inspire buyers and bring software developers back into the fold. Without software, users will continue to defect to the enemy: Microsoft's Windows.

Does that really matter to the average consumer? "Sure. You don't want to be in a situation where there is just one dominant player," says Simson Garfinkel, a former NeXT programmer and now computer technology columnist for the Boston Globe and HotWired Webzine.

"Apple must convince people that [the proposed hybrid NeXT/Mac OS] is a new and exciting environment," says Chris LeTocq, a software market analyst for market research firm Dataquest. "Newer but more of the same isn't good enough. That must be communicated with vision and charisma, and that's where Jobs comes in."

Whether Jobs wants to evangelise the Mac and oversee the Mac/NeXT marriage to any great extent remains an open question. Amelio insists that Jobs will report to him in an advisory role, without any direct control in Apple. Besides, Jobs has his hands full running Pixar, creator of the hugely successful feature film Toy Story.

With the Apple/NeXT deal, Jobs seems to have the luxury of deciding how to approach his "advisory" position. "I don't think Jobs has *eminence grise* as his goal," said LeTocq, "he's a front man. Whether he's satisfied with that remains to be seen."

Echoes of Britain in the streets of Seoul

Larry Elliott

TRADE unionists in Britain could be forgiven for privately smirking at television coverage of riot gear-clad police firing water-cannons at strikers in Seoul.

After all, for the past decade or more, Government ministers have insisted that curbs on trade unions and labour-market deregulation have been necessary to allow UK firms to compete with countries like South Korea.

Now, it appears, South Korea wants to be more like us. President, Kim Young-sam sneaked tough new legislation through the national assembly by busing in supporters for a 6am vote on December 26. In language all too familiar to British workers, Kim warned that the country had to embrace radical change if it was to compete globally.

"By ignoring the need to restructure, the Korean economy has perpetuated a high-cost, low-efficiency structure that has weakened its competitiveness at a time when we are exposed to intensified international competition," he said.

With this Western-style language come Western-style practices that run counter to the job-for-life philosophy underpinning the high productivity economies of Pacific Rim. Employment security is out, downsizing and layoffs are very much in.

The resulting industrial crisis now threatens to escalate into a general strike. Trade union leaders are defying summonses to appear before state prosecutors, and show no signs of bowing to government pressure to call off the strikes.

Although Kim's regime seems prepared for violent confrontation if necessary, the unions are in a strong position. South Korea has enjoyed growth averaging 8 per cent a year since 1960 and has an unemployment rate of 2 per cent. The labour market is tight, and employers face severe recruitment difficulties. Talk of widespread lock-outs and the hiring of new workforces is fanciful.

However, the dispute has implications central to the debate about globalisation's impact on labour standards. To an extent, Kim is right. South Korea's growth has turned it from a developing country into a developed economy. And, like any developed economy, it is finding it hard to compete with the new wave of developing economies such as Vietnam, Indonesia and — in particular — China.

In such circumstances, there are only two options to follow: go up-market and concentrate on value-added products, thereby reaping the rewards of investment in plant and skills; or go down-market, slashing costs in an attempt to compete with low-cost rivals.

South Korea is trying a bit of both. Its exports have been pushed up-market, partly in response to investment from Japanese firms seeking an East Asian haven from an overvalued yen. But for Kim, the transformation has not been rapid enough.

At a time when labour costs have been rising rapidly, export growth has slowed and the current-account deficit has risen to more than 4 per cent of GDP. Higher unit-labour costs have fed through into the corporate bottom line, with profits of quoted companies falling by 40 per cent in the first half of last year. Kim's response has been to make life easier for big business and tougher for unions.

This is pretty familiar stuff in the West. But there are two added complications. The first is that South Korea has for some years been desperate to attain membership of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, which includes all the leading industrialised nations. Being allowed into the "rich man's club" is a sign that an industrialising country has made it. But South Korea's membership was held up by concerns about its labour record, and it was admitted only last month after satisfying the OECD on certain basic standards.

It has been embarrassing for the OECD, to say the least, that just two weeks after gaining entry South Korea announced its draconian new measures. *International trade-union* bodies are now pressing the OECD to force Kim to back down.

The South Korean crisis comes at a time when labour standards are moving up the political agenda. Last month's World Trade Organisation *meeting was dominated by a debate* about whether countries with dubious labour practices should enjoy tariff-free access to global markets.

In Brief

THE European Commission *has threatened to take the* British government to court over plans by British Airways to form a transatlantic alliance with the US carrier American Airlines.

VOLKSWAGEN *agreed to pay* General Motors $100 million as part of a settlement of allegations that the German carmaker purloined trade secrets by employing former GM executive José Ignacio Lopez.

RAYETHON and Northrop Grumman are locked in a $9 billion bid for Hughes Electronics, the defence unit of General Motors, as the battle for survival between US defence firms escalated.

TWO of the biggest securities houses in the US — Morgan Stanley and Lehman Brothers — reported record figures. Morgan's pre-tax profits rose to $1.57 billion, a 48 per cent increase on 1995. Lehman's profits rose 72 per cent, to $416 million.

THE UK car industry is selling more vehicles abroad than at home for the first time in more than 40 years. Exports rose by one-fifth in 1996, to account for 54 per cent of output.

RTZ-CRA, the world's biggest mining company, is to sell an Australian mining project at the centre of a long ownership dispute with local Aborigines. It is handing Century Zinc, which owns the site, to the rival firm Pasminco for $270 million.

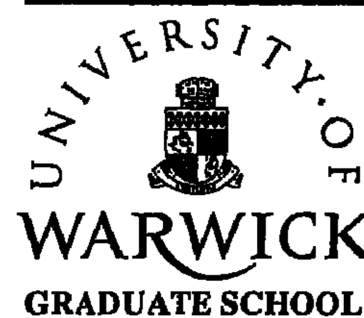
CONSUMER electronics group Philips has given up management control of the German television and video recorder maker Grundig, where it has lost about $950 million in little more than a decade.

A US law firm has filed a suit to halt a multi-million dollar severance package to Michael Ovitz. The suit alleges that his performance as Walt Disney president for 14 months does not warrant the $130 million severance that he is being paid.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates January 13	Sterling rates January 6
Australia	2.1418-2.1441	2.1360-2.1386
Austria	18.64-18.66	18.53-18.55
Belgium	54.62-54.66	54.26-54.33
Canada	2.2462-2.2500	2.3082-2.3104
Denmark	10.09-10.10	10.05-10.07
France	8.94-8.94	8.90-8.91
Germany	2.6506-2.6522	2.6351-2.6377
Hong Kong	12.90-12.91	13.02-13.03
Ireland	1.0154-1.0171	1.0127-1.0146
Italy	2,677-2,680	2,591-2,593
Japan	193.96-194.13	194.86-195.11
Netherlands	2.9737-2.9779	2.9549-2.9601
New Zealand	2.3724-2.3761	2.3771-2.3802
Norway	10.61-10.62	10.68-10.69
Portugal	264.46-264.65	264.33-264.39
Spain	221.28-221.64	221.47-221.77
Sweden	11.66-11.68	11.70-11.72
Switzerland	2.2992-2.3015	2.2821-2.2850
USA	1.6678-1.6685	1.6842-1.6852
ECU	1.3638-1.3650	1.3582-1.3596

FTSE 100 Share Index up 0.9 at 4107.3. FTSE 250 Index up 18.8 at 4834.2. Gold up $1.00 at $359.75.



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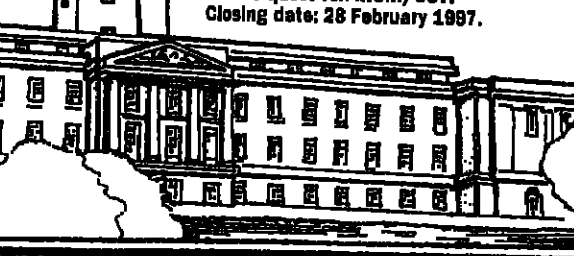
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Fax: 0115 951 5205.
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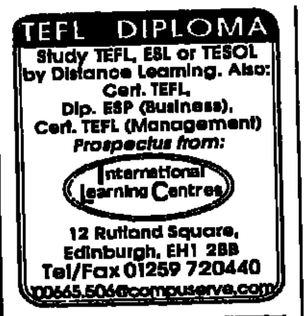
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Friends or foes?

War in Bosnia tested the mettle of two police officers — one Muslim, one Serb. **Julian Borger** reports

THIS is the story of two Bosnian policemen. Both are now in their mid-thirties. As well-educated, dedicated young professionals before the war, they represented the best the doomed state of Yugoslavia had to offer.

One is a Muslim, the other a Serb, but in April 1992, when the barricades went up across Bosnia, they patrolled their home town of Foca together, trying to reason with the hotheads in a vain effort to prevent the approaching slaughter.

And when the town descended into a nightmare of executions and mass rape, the Serb rescued his Muslim colleague and had him smuggled across the lines.

The Muslim, Himzo Selimovic, is now the police chief in the Sarajevo suburb of Ilijas. The war has tinged his black hair and moustache with threads of grey, and left him thoughtful and melancholy. Like many Muslims, he finds it hard to talk about 1992 without his eyes filling with tears. The first thing he says about the war is that he owes his survival to his Serb friend, Dragan Gagovic, who was his right-hand man when Mr Selimovic was chief inspector in Foca.

Several other Foca Muslims also credit their survival to Mr Gagovic, so it is hard for them to come to terms with what happened. Mr Selimovic shakes his head when he considers the situation. Mr Gagovic is now an indicted war criminal, charged in June last year by the Hague war crimes tribunal with rape and *ex-officio* responsibility for many of the atrocities committed in this eastern Bosnian town, where 1,500 Muslims are thought to have been murdered.

Mr Gagovic still lives in Foca. Despite the indictment, he is now a uniformed police officer. In fact, he is now an instructor, teaching civic duties and karate to new officers. He claims to drink regularly with the United Nations police monitors based nearby. "If they arrest me, too bad," he says nonchalantly.

Over the past few months, the two policemen have conducted an extraordinary dialogue across Bosnia's ethnic boundary. Mr Selimovic sent news of a new-born daughter and Mr Gagovic sent back congratulations, with a bottle of home-made brandy. At the same time, they have sounded out each other's war memories.

Mr Gagovic and Mr Selimovic agree the first signs of trouble came to Foca after the Bosnian elections in 1990, when the country's new parties exploited the easy rallying call of ethnic identity. Foca was roughly split, with a slight Muslim majority. The Muslims supported Alija Izetbegovic's Party for Democratic Action, while the Serbs backed the Serb Democratic Party (SDS).

Soon after the elections, the police came across trucks full of weapons belonging to the Serb-dominated Yugoslav National Army (JNA) on isolated country roads. Once in the autumn of 1991, Mr Selimovic impounded a load of mortars and assault rifles, but was ordered by senior military officers to release it. He believes the weapons were bound for Serb militants.

Mr Gagovic says he heard frequent rumours that the JNA was arming civilians, but he was unable to prove anything.

The final signal for the war to begin was the arrival of paramilitary groups from Serbia and Montenegro, blooded the previous year in the war with Croatia. In early April 1992, they began the ethnic cleansing of Zvornik and Bijeljina in the north.

On April 8, 1992, the self-styled Serbian Guard and Serbian Volunteer Guard entered Foca and began rounding up Muslims, with the aid of local Serb criminals and extremists who donned uniforms and took part enthusiastically in the subsequent looting. The seven other Foca Serbs indicted for war crimes all fall into this category.

Bosnia's police, who in 1992 still wore the insignia of the old Yugoslav force, found themselves at the sharp end of ethnic cleansing

Muslim men were separated from their families and taken to Foca's huge prison, known as the KP Dom, where about 500 are thought to have been shot or bludgeoned to death, their bodies thrown into the nearby Drina river. The women and children were interned in sports halls and schools, where hundreds were repeatedly raped and assaulted before being deported to Montenegro.

ONE OF those internment camps, the Partizan sports hall in central Foca, was next to Mr Gagovic's police station — and the Hague indictment says it was under his control. Mr Gagovic denies this vehemently. The guards, he claims, were paramilitaries in old police uniforms.

By April 9, Mr Selimovic had realised his position was no longer tenable. The SDS had ordered the Serb police to set up their own unit on the ground floor of the police station. He had only eight Muslim officers left, and the streets were full of Serb soldiers. He ordered his men to slip out one by one. He went last.

"I met Dragan Gagovic at the door," Mr Selimovic recalls. I said: "Please help these people." Dragan cried. He said he wouldn't stay on at the police station without us, and he pulled out his men half an hour later."

Mr Selimovic fled to a friend's flat, but by the next day he realised he was surrounded. Serb soldiers were searching the buildings on either side. As a last resort, he called Mr Gagovic.

"I told him he had two choices: to help us to escape or allow us to be killed. He was silent for two minutes. Then he said he would help because we had always co-operated correctly."

Ten minutes later, another Serb policeman came for Mr Selimovic, and on Mr Gagovic's orders drove him to a nearby area under Muslim control. A week later, on April 19, Mr Gagovic led his men back to the Foca police station and resumed work.

"This was his great mistake," says Mr Selimovic. "He could have left Foca. He could have resigned."

Mr Gagovic's explanation for his return is likely to be the core of his defence if he ever stands trial. "I felt responsible to prevent the looting and burning. It was a very strange time and we could not do more than we did. All the people who came to the police station got permission to leave. We gave out 3,000 permits . . . If I had not been there, 3,000 Muslims would not be alive today."

The rape indictment against Mr Gagovic is graphic enough. It describes how a Muslim woman went to him to complain about the systematic rape being carried out in Foca. Instead of taking a report he is said to have raped her, forcing her to have anal and oral sex. During the assault, he allegedly pointed his rifle at her neck.

Mr Gagovic says he is outraged at the charge. "It is rude and disgusting that the Hague tribunal could accuse me of such an act," he says. He claims to have sheltered a number of Muslim women in his flat until he could provide exit permits. He insists he never laid a finger on them and names some of them, although most are now refugees abroad.

One woman on the list, however, happened to be in Sarajevo recently, and agreed to tell her story on condition of anonymity. She confirmed that Mr Gagovic had sheltered her, her sister and mother in a Foca flat, and had then arranged transportation to Montenegro.

After explaining all this at a cafe table in Sarajevo, she took a deep breath and said she had missed out one night in her narrative, which until then she had only recounted to her husband and a psychiatric nurse in a refugee camp.

It was the night before she left Foca. She said Mr Gagovic turned up unexpectedly at the flat and sat down facing her. "He started to talk about how he had noticed me a year before and how beautiful I was. He also promised to help my father in the KP Dom. And then he proposed to me."

Surprised and scared, the woman said she could not get married as she was midway through her studies. He was angry and disappointed. Later that night she says he raped her twice. She said it was not a "brutal" assault, as she was too terrified of waking her mother and sister to put up much resistance. "He saved me," she said, "but he also destroyed half my life."

The rape reports have caused Mr Selimovic visible pain. They present him with an awful dilemma. "Gagovic saved my life," he repeats. "But if anyone testified he committed such a crime against human dignity, I would be ready to kill him. Even if he were my brother, I would do the same. It doesn't matter how many people he saved."

CLASSIFIED

CAR HIRE



GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 19 1997

Wail of the lonesome pine

Tom Bryson on a fierce battle to save the last of the 300-year-old giant pines in the wilderness of northern Ontario

THE Canadian lumber baron, JR Booth, predicted in 1856 that the white pine forests of the Ottawa Valley would last 700 years. They lasted 70.

Today, less than 1 per cent of North America's old-growth pine forest survives. A third of it is close to the town of Temagami, in northern Ontario, and Mike Harris, premier of the richest province in the world's richest country, wants to open it up to logging and mining.

Since late last summer, Temagami has been the scene of bombing, road blockades, civil disobedience and even demands for an independent northern Ontario. So what's happening to the previously well-ordered, peaceful, socially democratic and boring "Scandinavia" of the Americas?

The interests of the protagonists are complex and diverse. An Indian land claim in the area is unsettled. Environmentalists say that the province's new land-use plans threaten the old-growth forest. Ontario's Liberal government has decided to allow large-scale mining exploration, logging and road development in wilderness areas, and new legislation hands over the job of regulating forest exploitation on public lands to the logging industry. How can the various groups, who all claim to have sustainable development and the environment at heart, unravel this tangle?

In June, the Ontario government's management plan set out which old-growth forests would be protected and those where logging would occur. The foresters say that selective felling is the best way to maintain and reinvigorate the forests. Fires used to sweep through these forests every hundred years or so, but fire prevention this century has reduced the incidence of fires, making it difficult for young pines to germinate and establish in the dense underbrush and undisturbed soil. The mayor of Temagami also wants to see the creation of 100 year-round jobs in mills and mines.



Call of the wild . . . environmentalists paddle into battle to save Canada's ancient pines PHOTOGRAPH: TOM BRYSON

At Owain Lake, the loggers intend to make a "shelterwood cut", leaving the trees with the greatest reproductive capacity; they intend to fell the 300-year-old giants and leave the middle-aged trees to grow on to maturity. They claim that this mimics the effects of fire and leaves a natural forest.

Earthroots, a Toronto-based environmental group, claim that shelterwood cutting is just a slower form of clear-cut and want the old growth preserved from industrial exploitation. They have set up a "forest defence camp", blockaded the road, and chained themselves to concrete blocks. Their leaders have been jailed.

Ecological, aesthetic and spiritual values are evident here; respect for natural processes and systems, and a reluctance to overexploit species and habitats underpins the protest.

In 1973, the Teme-Augama-Anishnabai Indians brought a legal action to stop mining exploration over 10,000sq km in the Temagami region. In 1995, the provincial government had the legal cautions removed and subsequently prospectors began staking claims. There is a bombed out bridge on a logging road at the southern point of the land claim; locals are certain the Indians did the bombing.

It is widely recognised that American Indians have, or at least had, a set of beliefs and attitudes that manifest a reverence for the life forms and forces of the natural world. Evidence of that spirituality is still there in the woods: a bundle of sweetgrass placed below rock paintings on Diamond Lake; totems and other offerings below a pair of giant red and white pines in a sacred grove above Obabika Lake.

Alex Mathias, an Ojibway and a member of the militant Ma-Kominisig-Anishinawbeg (MKA), has built a winter trapping cabin illegally on Obabika Lake, in a provincial wilderness park close to his father's burial site. Mathias claims a traditional home range that covers most of the park.

Since last September, Temagami has received daily attention in the Canadian press. Logging has been suspended following a court order, protesters have been arrested, and at a recent meeting in North Bay people cheered a call for northern Ontario to become a separate province, angry at what they see as meddling in their affairs by Toronto environmentalists.

The Ontario government is focusing firmly on human economic needs and the view that sustainable management of the old growth does not detract from its value. Earthroots favours preservation of the old growth because it is "critical natural capital" and because something of significance is about to be lost. Mathias has lost something of great personal significance: he wants his family's traditional lands and lifestyle back.

Bombings, protests and arrests indicate an intractable problem, but something else is going on here. Since JR Booth & Co plundered the forests, values and policy have gradually changed. The unrest in Temagami is the latest phase in the negotiation of a conservation rationale. The changes may be slow but the result ought to be a mutually beneficial integration of human and natural interests.

Northern Ontario has so much that Europe has lost: vast expanses of wild country, opportunities for solitude and real recreation, a huge potential for eco-tourism. Tourism is now the world's largest industry, and eco-tourism is the fastest growing sector, expected to double between 1995 and 2000.

Earthroots and the tour guides who are already making a living out of city folk seeking a glimpse of the wilderness believe well-marketed and managed eco-tourism could bring jobs, protect wild places and limit damage to species and habitats. This could ensure that local people value areas such as the old-growth forest because they gain enough revenue from tourism to regard the preserved forest as a source of income. It could also mean they become part of the lobby for preservation of their natural heritage.

China faces outcry over bear farming

Fiona Holland

WHEN China's ministry of forestry dreamed up the idea of farming rare bears more than a decade ago, officials thought they had hit on the ideal way of meeting a growing demand for bile — a key ingredient in traditional Chinese medicine.

Originally, the plan was to farm 40,000 bears. But China overlooked something: the international outcry from conservation and animal welfare groups which condemned the cruelty of "milking" bile from the gall bladders of bears incarcerated in cages so small that they caused deformities.

Three years after originally exposing the trade, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw) has reached a milestone in its campaign to end bear farming. Against all the odds in a country where tradition dating back thousands of years views wildlife primarily as a resource, Ifaw has just opened a sanctuary in Guangdong, close to Hong Kong, for eight bears rescued from a farm.

The bears have survived years of imprisonment in body crushing cages — and the subsequent surgery to remove catheters implanted in their gall bladders.

Suzanne Boardman, consultant veterinary surgeon to Ifaw and London Zoo, said: "They were in very, very bad condition. The fact they survived is absolutely astonishing."

More than 7,500 bears are still imprisoned on 480 farms across China, and their future remains uncertain. He Hiyou, deputy director of the state administration for traditional Chinese medicine, said at the opening of the sanctuary that it was still official government policy to "use wildlife resources". While herbal alternatives and less intrusive ways of tapping bile were being sought, the government had yet to decide whether the industry should be closed down, he said.

Song Huigang, deputy chief of the China Wildlife Conservation Association, said it had suggested to the government that bear farming be phased out. But eliminating the lucrative trade posed many difficulties.

It will fall to Ifaw's Asia representative, Jill Robinson, to balance practicalities in China with foreign ideals about animal welfare. In the short term, Ifaw is working to improve conditions on farms and funding research into a herbal alternative, but trustee Karen Cotton is adamant: "Our bottom line is that we will never accept the institutionalisation of bear farming."

David Chu, a pro-China Hong Kong legislator and reformed hunter, is a surprising Ifaw ally. He donated land at Panyu for the sanctuary, but admits: "It is going to be a long battle because China is so large and this is an ancient practice rooted in Chinese culture. It may take decades, but I hope to see it in my lifetime."

Asian loggers strip the Amazon's assets

Jan Rocha in São Paulo

AS THEIR own forests near exhaustion, Asian logging companies are moving into South America: Guyana, Surinam, and now the big prize, the Amazon rainforest.

Large parts of still intact forest in remote areas where government agencies are weak and unmotivated add up to a dangerous cocktail, says Nigel Sizer, of the Washington-based World Resources Institute. "There aren't places where you can acquire logging rights to several million hectares at attractive prices."

Africa is out of the question because of political instability, so the solution is Brazil's Amazon rainforest, an area of 700,000sq km, with one-third of the world's existing timber supplies. The forest contains 60 billion cubic metres of timber, said to be worth $4 trillion. By 2006, Brazil's share of the world market is expected to leap to 20 per cent.

In Guyana, Malaysian companies obtained government concessions to vast forest areas, and timber production multiplied fivefold between 1991 and 1996, forcing the government to decree a three-year moratorium on new concessions until environmental laws can be tightened. In Brazil, the Asians are more discreet. They have begun buying up small-scale, often bankrupt, local timber companies, keeping their original names.

WTK of Malaysia paid $7 million for Amaplac in January, and also bought 300,000 hectares of forest near the Jurua river, an Amazon tributary, for around $2.4 million. Total WTK investment in timber is reported to be $18 million.

Officially bankrupt, the Amaplac sawmill now produces 3,200 metres of plywood a month. Samling, another Malaysian giant, is negotiating to buy Amacol. Compensa, a local timber firm, now belongs to China's Tianjin Fortune Timber Company.

Malaysian and Chinese businessmen have been visiting the offices of the government's environmental agency, Ibama, to find out about environmental legislation.

The advantage of buying Brazilian companies is that they already have forest management plans (PMFs) approved by Ibama. Under such a plan, the area to be logged is divided into 25 parts. Each year, one part should be rationally exploited and then left for the next 25 years to allow natural reforestation.

In practice, says Paulo Lira, of the World Wildlife Fund, most PMFs are a fiction. A recent audit done by Ibama found irregularities in two out of every three plans. The companies also buy timber from clandestine loggers. Armed groups of up to 100 men invade ranches and extract timber, which they then sell on to those with a PMF. All Ibama can do is fine companies when they are caught.

Amaplac/WTK has already been fined $160,000 for exporting illegal timber. And Sifec, now Chinese owned, was fined $140,000 in June for a similar offence. According to an Ibama superintendent, Hamilton Casar, WTK have the tractors to log all the timber they can get their hands on.

Foreign companies have been exporting mahogany and other hardwoods from Brazil for years, but what concerns Brazilian environmentalists and authorities is the voracity of the new Asian arrivals — and their record of devastation. In July, a two-year moratorium on new concessions for mahogany and virola was announced. But it has had no effect on existing concessions, and at the present rate of extraction Brazil's mahogany resources will only last 30 years.

Malaysian ministers visiting Brazil have protested at being cast in the role of villain, but companies from their country control 80 per cent of the world trade in tropical timber. Without the Amazon rainforest, it is difficult to see where they are going to turn for supplies.

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
January 19 1997

Henry Holt handles one of the 7,000 bricks in his beloved collection PHOTOGRAPH: DENIS THORPE

Load of old bricks in need of a roof

MUSEUM directors in Lancashire are urgently seeking a permanent home for a unique collection of chunky artefacts, *writes David Ward*.

Henry Holt, who died last month aged 83, collected bricks. He collected them for 30 years and eventually owned 7,000 from all over the world.

"He used to stroke them," his niece, Elaine Brown, recalled. "There are all sorts of shapes and sizes. A brick isn't a brick, if you know what I mean."

Mr Holt, a farmer, kept bricks in and around his three-bed semi in Waterfoot, Lancashire. He got into bricks when he picked one up marked "E H & Co, Rossendale". He discovered the H stood for Holt; there was no family connection, but he was hooked.

Ian Gibson, Lancashire's principal keeper of industrial museums, said: "He would have liked them to stay together, but that it is unlikely. However you display the bricks, I don't think even the most eccentric or enthusiastic member of the public would want to gaze at 7,000 of them."

Letter from India Gareth and Jane Wood

The road to enlightenment

POCKETS of mist hung over the steep slopes of Simla as we set off to catch the early bus to Sarahan, a village 175km away in the Kinnaur district of the Himalayas renowned for its magnificent wood-carved Bimakhali temple. The bus station was already busy and we queued in the rain for our tickets. The floor of the ticket office was completely worn away, leaving joists and bare earth where a million or more Indians had patiently waited before us. Comforting smells of tea and breakfast hung in the air, regularly dispersed by thick clouds of exhaust fumes pumped from ageing bus engines. The bus was packed but we were lucky enough to find seats, squashed between the hill people and their enormous bundles of luggage.

Our fellow passengers were relaxed and talkative for the most part, blissfully indifferent to the appalling road conditions and the bus's poor suspension. The only person who appeared to be in a bad mood was a monk in the seat ahead of me, who scowled and grumbled constantly. He was also the only passenger who insisted on smoking, his head hanging out of the window, while the entire bus voiced its disapproval.

An hour and a half out of Simla we came across an elephant and a group of labourers drawing timber out of the forest. The road continued to deteriorate, and Tarmac was soon a distant memory. The bus grumbled and lurched on, gingerly negotiating the oncoming lorries at inappropriate passing places. Everywhere labourers, like Sisyphus, were busy mending the road, fighting a losing battle against the weather and the incessant heavy traffic. A woman in a bright red sari emptied dust from a wicker basket; two men operated a spade, one shovelling, the other hauling rhythmically on a rope attached to the handle. Meanwhile women sat on piles of small stones, patiently breaking down larger stones with small hammers.

On a bend in the road we screeched to a halt, face to face with an oncoming bus, while a lorry trundled into the back of us with a sickening thud. The passengers, laughing nervously, clambered down from the bus and made the most of the delay to stretch their legs while the drivers did their best to straighten out the damage.

OUR FIRST scheduled stop was at Narkanda, a tiny village on a col at about 2,600 metres, and the setting of Lispeth, one of Kipling's Plain Tales Of The Hills. The place probably hadn't changed a lot since his time. Hill people squatted in the dust smoking *bidis*, cows ruminated comfortably in the middle of the road and we saw our first prayer flags, fluttering forlornly like old plastic bags caught on a barbed wire fence. Sitting next to the temple, an ironic smile on his face, was a wild looking sadhu, a double cross in gold paint on his forehead.

We continued on our journey, the Sutlej river, swollen with snow-melt and monsoon, appearing thousands of metres below. The bus ended its journey at Rampur, a dusty crossroads in the valley bottom, and we covered the remaining 40km in a relatively new Jeep.

The beauty of the Bimakhali temple and its setting were enhanced by its sheer inaccessibility. At nightfall, the temple, with its exquisite fretwork illuminated from the inside, glowed like a Chinese lantern. We presented ourselves at the gate for evening prayer and were each given a Nehru-style cotton cap to wear. On the third floor of the temple the priest intoned the office while two wardens clashed cymbals and blew long blasts on an ancient trumpet. A thick blanket of mist shrouded the surrounding village.

As first-time travellers to India, coming from a continent where fast travel and well-maintained vehicles are taken for granted, we were struck by the sheer mass of people on the move, and the endless resourcefulness. India is a powerful country, importing only 5 per cent of its gross national product, and everything is constantly repaired. In Europe, we idly think of scrapping our fridge at the first sign of trouble. But in India, in the case of a serious breakdown, a lorry driver will think nothing of patiently dismantling a gear-box and spreading the cogs around, prepared to sleep under his vehicle until the job is done. As Mahatma Gandhi once commented when asked what he thought of Western civilisation: "It would be a very good idea."

This article is one of a regular series of "letters" from those living all over the world. Readers are invited to submit articles of no longer than 800 words (see address on page 2). Please enclose a self-addressed envelope if you wish your manuscript to be returned

Notes and Queries Joseph Harker

ALL moons in our solar system have names. Why doesn't earth's moon have a name?

BUT IT has: its name is "Moon". Every natural satellite is identified with a mythical figure. Jupiter's 16 moons, for example, bear the names of women (and a man: Ganymede) whom this remarkable god was supposed to have had love affairs with. Earth's moon was given the name "Selene" by the Greeks and "Luna" by the Romans, each a goddess. The ancient Germans called it "Man" or "Mani" and had a myth about a miserable person of this name who, together with his sister (the sun), is being pursued by a hound across the skies until the end of the world. From this myth the Germanic words "mane" (Danish), "maan" (Dutch), "moon" (English) and "mond" (German) are derived, later transferred to all celestial bodies circulating around planets. — *Claus Hollenberg, Marburg, Germany*

SHOPPING trolleys taken from supermarket premises by customers litter streets worldwide. Will anybody ever think of a way to solve this problem?

ONE of our largest supermarkets can only be entered or exited by negotiating 12 steps. Not one trolley leaves the building. — *Churchill Frost, Prague, Czech Republic*

IN LOS ANGELES the problem has been solved by an army of men in pick-up trucks who drive around the city retrieving abandoned carts. — *Alistair Hattingh, Buenos Aires, Argentina*

IS THERE more justice or injustice in the world?

IF ONE believes that God is good and his ways are unknowable, then one believes there is no injustice since seeming injustice is part of God's plan. If one believes that justice is strictly a human concept, then the ratio of justice to injustice is a problem of definition and data collection. — *M D Fisher, Cashmere, Queensland, Australia*

ANY society that has a concept of justice is an unjust society: when justice becomes universal, the concept of justice will disappear. The fish has no concept of water until it is deprived of it. — *J Owens, Mitcham, Surrey*

THE richest 43 people in the world, combined, own as much wealth as the poorest 2 billion. I cannot somehow see justice retiring back from that sort of deficit. — *Martyn Giscombe-Smith, London*

APART from Summer Holiday, which is the worst song ever recorded?

FAIRYTALE Of New York by the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, which features the memorable lines: "You scumbag/ you maggot/ you cheap lousy faggot/ Happy Christmas me arse/ I hope it's our last." — *Bob Heys, Ripponden, Halifax*

WHEN we couldn't get a seat in the pub, we used to play O Superman by Laurie Anderson on the juke box. It worked every time. — *A James, Powys*

ACCORDING to Aldous Huxley it must be Mammy, as sung by Al Jolson in The Jazz Singer (1927). Huxley said: "My flesh crept as the loudspeaker poured out those sodden words, that greasy sagging melody. I felt ashamed of myself for listening to such things, for even being a member of the species to which such things are addressed." — *R Allem, Chevington, Suffolk*

Any answers?

WHAT happened to all the money Bernard Shaw left to further the cause of spelling reform? — ***K S Lysons, Matlock, Derbyshire***

WHAT is the origin of "kick the bucket"? — ***Penny Sparling, Ottawa, Canada***

ABOUT 20 years ago there was much talk about a one-off inoculation jab being developed to put an end to tooth decay. Did it just not work or did the toothpaste manufacturers suppress it? — ***John Hodges, London***

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

A Country Diary

Richard Mabey

BERKHAMSTED: According to my diary, the last time the garden was locked under frost for more than a week was in February 1966. There was more snow then, and the freeze lasted for nearly four weeks. But my bird records still sound as if they are from another planet. The nut bags were monopolised by siskins, which hung upside down and picked delicately at the nuts as if they were using chopsticks. The seed-strewn planks I'd lain across the snow were crowded with starlings, robins and mixed finch flocks — house sparrows, greenfinches, linnets, yellowhammers, reed buntings, even the occasional corn bunting. Around the edges of the garden, various thrushes staked out territories round piles of apples (including one piratical fieldfare that gobbled its way through the pounds of Bramleys). This year's gathering reflected the worrying changes in our common bird populations. There was not a single house sparrow, siskin or linnet, and only isolated robins and song thrushes. The lawn was dominated by large packs of chaffinches and male blackbirds, presumably from the Continent, and the lilac and buddleia by tits. But one thing was unchanged from 1966: there were either no birds or lots of birds.

A rogue blackbird, that insisted on hounding every potential competitor out of the garden, ended up exhausted and haggard from spending its time fighting not feeding. I find it heartening that, in these unrelenting conditions, birds opt for group security and a policy of live and let live rather than one of selfish aggression.

Playboy with a limp

THEATRE
Michael Billington

IS THERE such a thing as the real Ireland? Or is it a myth created down the ages by writers, artists and film-makers? That is the intriguing question posed by Martin McDonagh in The Cripple Of Inishmaan at London's National Theatre which, like the same writer's The Beauty Queen Of Leenane, lovingly feeds off Irish fantasy and offers its own wittily ironic, post-modern critique.

McDonagh's comic fable comes in heavily inverted commas. The setting is the bleak Aran Island of Inishmaan in 1934. The play's hero, Billy, is a crippled orphan whose parents drowned in a mysterious boating accident when he was a baby. Reared by two slightly batty pretend-aunts, the bookish, romanticising Billy seeks to escape this stifling, prying community by joining the film unit that is making Man Of Aran on the neighbouring island of Inishmore. What we see is the despised Billy seeking to achieve a new identity — and incidentally gain the love of the sharp-tongued local beauty — by entering the make-believe world of film and ultimately fleeing to Hollywood.

McDonagh's play is full of conscious references that all reinforce the central theme of reality versus fantasy. A pivotal figure is a local tale-spinner, Johnnypateenmike, who earns his keep by turning gossip into an art-form and who might have stepped straight out of a Boucicault play.

Synge's The Playboy Of The Western World, in which the boy-hero achieves maturity by turning his patricidal fantasies into reality, is also McDonagh's palpable prototype: what he seems to be saying is that Synge, once accused by St John Ervine of being "a faker of peasant speech", himself created a mythical version of Irish west coast life.

But McDonagh's point is that cinema has done more than anything to foster the Irish myth. It is no accident that the play is set at the time of Man Of Aran, which was once seen as a realistic portrait of an Irish fishing community. The richest, funniest scene is that in which Flaherty's film is shown on Inishmaan: the islanders either ignore it totally in pursuit of their local feuds or hilariously question its authenticity, crying: "It's rare that off Ireland you get sharks."

McDonagh's skill lies in having it both ways: in simultaneously exploiting and undermining Irish romantic myth. But he creates one character who, as far as I can see, is a genuine comic original: the local beauty, Helen, who is driven by a manic fury and who works, somewhat destructively, for the village egg-man. Offering to play the game of England versus Ireland with her brother, she enthusiastically cracks a succession of raw eggs against his pate: a practical demonstration of the yolk of oppression. As marvellously played by Aisling O'Sullivan, the character emerges as an authentic Irish termagant.

The play's main weakness is a technical one: McDonagh falls into a mechanical habit of comic reversal, so that any seeming statement of truth is instantly upended. By the end, you can see the device coming a mile off. But, although The Cripple at times has the air of ingenious pastiche, it is still buoyantly funny.

It is also well directed by Nicholas Hytner and beautifully designed by Bob Crowley. Ruaidhri Conroy, who has the spindly intensity of a young O'Toole, makes an impressive stage debut as Billy.

It is a highly accomplished play that suggests the literary and cinematic myths of Ireland are so encrusted they have now turned into reality. But, while recognising McDonagh's skill, one just hopes he will eventually move from ironic commentary on Ireland to rigorous self-revelation.



The new O'Toole? . . . Ruaidhri Conroy makes an impressive stage debut in The Cripple Of Inishmaan PHOTOGRAPH: TRISTRAM KENTON

A helluva hoofer

DANCE
Flachra Gibbons

THERE'S no point taking the mick out of Michael Flatley. Done up like a Celtic god gone wrong in Cuban heels and Schwarzenegger shoulder-pads, his shaved chest slathered in baby oil, he does it too well himself. But behind the ego that inflated the Riverdance phenomenon is one hell of a hoofer.

Dancer is too mean a word to describe a man who shook foundations and false teeth at Wembley arena last week. He styles himself as the Lord of the Dance. And he is. He has an overwhelming gangster aggression about him, the sort of swagger you'd imagine James Cagney having after a dose of steroids.

But he is also a ham, drunk on cheap glamour, mood muzak and flashy routines. It is only the amazing speed of his feet that stops you laughing at his leather trousers bulging with half the poultry counter from Sainsbury's. That, and the sheer depth of the tradition he is drawing on.

Where Riverdance strove to be a cross-cultural celebration of dance, and give the Irish forms their place in the pantheon of classic styles, this is an unashamed celebration of Michael Flatley, the all-dancing concert flautist and ex-boxing champ.

And yet, through all the conceit, there were moments when the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. The big ensemble numbers were hypnotic, where the traditional form was free from tat and sub-balletic poncing.

Flatley is the most arrogant performer I have ever seen. All he wants is an audience to worship him. And the terrible thing is, when he dances we do.

Getting the hump with Nelson

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

AS BENEDICT ALLEN set off on his camel in The Skeleton Coast (BBC2), I was reminded of the White Knight, who continually fell off his horse, now on one side, now the other. Alice kept waving her handkerchief because he seemed to need the encouragement.

Allen was crossing 1,000 miles of the Namib desert by camel. No man had done this before. The camel wasn't keen on doing it now.

The camel farm resounded to lion-like roaring. "That," said Allen, mercifully blocking the view with his bush hat, "is the castration of the young camels. With a blunt penknife." The operation is supposed to render camels more tractable but later events suggest there is a flaw in this reasoning.

His lead camel was Nelson ("deep down a gentleman"), possibly named after President Mandela. The second ("cold-hearted and calculating") was Jan. Jan kneed Allen. Allen complained. Jan kicked in the camera. It is a piece of film that should prove deservedly popular on It'll Be Alright On The Night. The farmhands, who had a well-developed sense of humour, tried to palm him off with Scorpion ("he's just mad") as the third camel.

Never, my son, shake hands with a left-handed draw or buy a camel called Scorpion.

Quite apart from coming off his camel involuntarily, Allen was doing all his own filming. Dismount . . . set timer . . . remount . . . pose against purple sunset . . . dismount . . . collect camera. It can't have been easy.

We spent some time inspecting his large and intimate bruises. I got the impression that he felt our sympathy was perfunctory: "That one hasn't even ripened yet. That bruise is going to be a real, real bruise. Oh God, I can't carry on sustaining these bruises!"

Laurens van der Post said once that a camel is a very fair animal: it would do its best for a fair request. He didn't say what a camel considers fair. Allen thought that all his camels wanted to do was loaf around the farm frightening the ostriches.

Off, eventually, they jolly well went, with Allen complaining of puss-filled sores all over his body. Perhaps he is allergic to camels.

The BBC's output is divided into incomprehensible sections. I have, for instance, never grasped the difference between Entertainment, Light Entertainment and Comedy. The Skeleton Coast comes under the Disability Unit. I can understand that.

On the subject of Boy's Own heroes, Bush Tucker Man has started a new series on Discovery. Bush Tucker Man, as his name suggests, has one distinctive feature. He eats anything.

He is telling tales of derring-do Down Under. I particularly like the story of John McDougall Stuart who, half dead in the desert, encountered a band of aborigines. They greeted him with a masonic sign. They'd met explorers before.

This week he told us about a bloke called Smithy, who crashed his plane in the Kimberley and was in real strife. Bush Tucker Man arrived in short shorts and dinged hat and showed how to live off the land. He ate snails, shellfish and kapok flowers, which did not taste of cushions but "sorta flahry". The berries of *grewia retusifolia* taste like *apfelstrudel*. It is better not to know their common name is dogs' bollocks.

Remote Location Catering is credited. Clearly a burger van follows them to these godforsaken spots. No dogs' bollocks for the film crew.

Bruce Gyngell, boss of Yorkshire Tyne Tees, has taken exception to Hollywood Lovers and plunged Leeds and Newcastle into a nuclear winter of Whicker repeats. It is the first time I'm glad I live in the Carlton region.

To say these Hollywood programmes are sleazy is to stretch the term to twanging. They are sanitised with a high gloss finish that shakes off seriousness.

Perhaps Gyngell watched the first five minutes and left in a lather of distaste. This was a piece on Mile High Adventures. For $395 you get the flight, the bed, champagne and chocolate-covered strawberries. You make your own entertainment. "We've had people show up with whipped cream," said the pilot. For the strawberries, I suppose.

But all these Hollywood programmes darken sharply at the end. This is often so brutally *outré* that it fills you with concern. It is as though you heard the engine on the fun flight start to fail.

A chorus of women had provided an animated commentary on the action but when they heard about Dr Takowsky's op their jaws dropped. "Oh . . . my . . . gard!" said Jackie Collins.

Dr Takowsky siphoned fat from Cindy's thigh ("Elevate this leg, John"), syringed it into her vulva, then squished it — his phrase — into the wall of the vagina. *Voilà*, a plumper vulva and a tighter vagina. "The girls have told me that when they go to the gym they love the definition in their leotard," he said.

The chorus of women burst into a starling chatter of derision. It was like watching a flock of birds swoop and veer as if alarmed. "Who in hell is that vain that they have to get fat injected into their cha-cha?" (Kennedy, MTV presenter). "I can't imagine it being for looks because I always turn the lights out" (Phyllis Diller, comedienne). And she laughed like an unblocked drain.

Which reminds me that there don't seem to be any *plumbers* in Hollywood. There are plenty of other professions. Baywatch babe, health guru, scandal agent, relationship therapist, fairy godmother, gay matchmaker, flirtation teacher, sex educator. A terrible place to have a blocked lavatory.

Most of the show feels like being shot with popcorn. Interviews are sliced thinly into wisecracking one-liners that make even the 40-watt people seem bright.

Those who showed native wit were Stephanie Beacham ("I have no flirting tips whatsoever. I only have '*Don't come within 100 yards of me!*'), Rita Rudner ("Dating on the Internet is good as it is very difficult to catch a disease"), and Roger, President Clinton's black-sheep brother, on lonely hearts ads ("Oh my gosh, I can't find a date! I need some help! I think I'll call a total stranger!").

Fountain of love . . . Vincent Perez and Irène Jacob in Antonioni's Beyond The Clouds

Say little, speak volumes

CINEMA
Derek Malcolm

ANTONIONI has two crosses to bear. The first is his own physical frailty, caused by a stroke some years ago that left him unable to make films for a disastrously long time. The second is that his type of romantic but almost metaphysical cinema is the exact opposite of what people appear to require nowadays.

The first disadvantage has been triumphantly dispensed with in Beyond The Clouds, for which Wim Wenders was assistant director. He found the old man, now well over 80 and unable to speak more than a couple of words at a time, very precise about what he wanted.

The second, as was evinced by the disappointing reception for his recently revived masterpiece L'Avventura, will probably not be so easily overcome. It's not so much that his time has passed, and the strength of his talent is weakening, it's more that we understand less and less about his type of cinema, which is so specifically not Hollywood.

No one could claim Beyond The Clouds was his most striking work, though only a dim viewer would be unable to appreciate his innate sense of place, time and memory, or the imaginative processes summed up in his framing and editing techniques.

The film comprises four stories linked by a director (John Malkovich, unfortunately, who has already done too much of this sort of thing to be repeatedly convincing) who is searching for a plot and characters for his film.

In the first, set in Ferrara, a young man falls for a girl he meets in a hotel, but when she offers herself to him he refuses her. The pleasure of yearning is more important to him than achieving his erotic ends. In the second, the director himself follows a girl who shocks him by telling him how she stabbed her father to death. They make love.

The third story has a woman whose husband has left her for another refusing an arrangement with a married man; and in the fourth, a young man follows a girl into church hoping for a liaison, only to find she's about to enter a convent.

The stories are elliptical and sensuous — the amount of female flesh on display suggests that old age and infirmity don't necessarily mean a lessening of desire.

The linking devices serve to put a patina of mysterious pretension upon the stories that is not always borne out. This is the weakest part of the structure, but then the pleasure of the film lies not in the tales themselves, nor in the performances of them by the distinguished likes of Sophie Marceau, Irène Jacob, Jeanne Moreau, Fanny Ardant, Malkovich, Peter Weller, Jean Reno and even the late lamented Marcello Mastroianni (who knows exactly how to play this sort of thing — by looking into the middle-distance).

No, the film's appeal lies in the way Antonioni looks back at his past themes with little visual homages that seem to sum up a long career of extraordinary film-making. Mood and atmosphere were always the thing, and Antonioni was a master of saying very little but managing to imply a very great deal.

What we take from the film is a sense that we may just have been here before, at a time when the cinema was capable of mystery as well as excitement, and of working on our imaginations as well as our senses.

NO MORE powerful, or contentious, piece of cinema has come out of Ireland recently than Terry George's Some Mother's Son, a first feature written by George and Jim Sheridan which is the story, told through the eyes of two mothers, of prisoners involved in the 1981 Maze prison hunger strike.

One of the mothers (Helen Mirren) is no supporter of her son's politics but is slowly driven into the nationalist camp by her situation, and her friendship with Fionnula Flanagan's character, a known IRA sympathiser.

Meanwhile they both face the dilemma of whether or not to save their sons since, once they are unconscious, the parents have the right to request medical help. The cause, and the men themselves, demand that they do not.

The film is powerful because of the performances of the two principals and its dramatic look at the hunger strikers themselves, with John Lynch playing Bobby Sands, the first martyr to the cause, and Aidan Gillen and David O'Hara as the two sons.

It is clear where the film-makers' sympathies lie — the Brits are caricatures, particularly the young Thatcherite monster who recommends no negotiations with the strikers. This unbalances what might otherwise have been a moving film, and one that clearly knows its subject matter.

The mirror often has two faces, but it may be no comfort to some that both of them belong to Barbra Streisand in the film of that name. She is a star who fashions her own directorial efforts so confidently around herself that every other character seems to appear by accident.

Once one has seen The Mirror Has Two Faces, one is inclined to believe rumours that Streisand sacked the entire crew a few days into the shoot, and that her co-star now says he needs a long rest. The movie is an inflated epic, intended to be a romantic comedy but fashioned in the style of something like a late Judy Garland tear-jerker directed by a tipsy George Cukor.

Our heroine is a nice Jewish university lecturer with a disdainful mother (Lauren Bacall) who can't get herself a man because she's ordinary and doesn't dress well. She spies an answer to her prayers in Jeff Bridges' shy but handsome bachelor.

He has had plenty of affairs but is tired of bed and bored. He wants a real relationship and, after an awkward courtship, it appears that that is what he is going to get from her. They agree to marry. But no hanky-panky whatsoever, thank you, just jolly good companionship.

It works for a spell. But the poor girl gets frustrated so, after consulting her mother, she attempts the change from Plain Jane to Cinderella at the ball. Will it work? Those who are not already asleep are kept in agonising suspense . . .

The problem is that Barbra dressed down is more attractive than Barbra dressed to kill. And however hard poor Mr Bridges applies himself to his part, we are in a quandary. If we sympathise with him, we want La Streisand to leave him to contemplate his own navel rather than hers.

But one mustn't be too cynical so early in the year. If you want romance with a capital R and a film with good old-fashioned values (plus a very nice performance from Bacall), The Mirror Has Two Faces may be just your bag.

The King and I

Howard Feinstein meets Pacino, the screen tough guy who just wants to direct Shakespeare

AL PACINO'S screen persona is hard to pin down. When he plays the bad guy (the bank robber in Dog Day Afternoon, for example), an angel usually manages to seep through. His good guys (Serpico, Michael Corleone in The Godfather, the cop in Cruising) often harbour a dark psyche. Now, Looking For Richard, a documentary he directs and in which he portrays both himself and Shakespeare's treacherous hunchback, Richard III, offers yet another facet of the Bronx-born actor: he's funny.

Few people know that Pacino started out co-writing and performing comedy routines in Greenwich Village. Does he see himself as a funny man?

"A skeleton goes into a bar and asks the barman for a beer and a mop." Pause. Long pause. "Get it? Now that's funny, isn't it?" A big laugh from him.

Looking For Richard isn't going to have audiences rolling in the aisles, but it does suggest that Pacino's humour extends some way beyond this type of Christmas-cracker joke. He's a consummate mugger. He mugs, on the New York sidewalks and at the story conference table. He even spoofs Richard's death scene. But then, the famously shy actor has worked on this film for three and a half years.

"I don't think of myself one way or another as funny, but I do have a laugh once in a while. How did I get this far? I'm 56. How the hell did I do it?" Tenacity and talent are the most likely answers, not to mention an eye for the commercial side of the business and a lifelong awareness of the need to stretch himself. Looking For Richard has him breaking new ground as both a performer and a director. It's what you might call a constructive vanity production, with Pacino often in front of the camera and always behind it.

"Richard is one of the greatest villains ever written. One of the main reasons for that may be that Shakespeare gives him a conscience, makes him aware of what he does. You take Iago: he's more the banality of evil. It's Othello's play. With Richard, the play's *called* Richard. The character evolves in a more complicated way and is much richer in all of the emotions. So there's a lot more to play there." About the overlap between himself and the opportunistic, power-mad Richard, he is ambivalent. "I think everything is in everybody. An actor is an emotional athlete."

As director, Pacino gracefully intercuts scenes of himself with rehearsals, readings, and full-costume stagings of one of Shakespeare's most intricate plays. "If I were to do it over again, I might have picked an easier play," he says. "When you take Richard out of the context of the War of the Roses, and pull it out of the Henry VI trilogy, well, it's a play people have difficulty understanding."

If Shakespeare's original is intricate, so too is the film Pacino has made. It contains hundreds of shots (on 16mm and super-16mm), and it ranges over a lot of ground. "Looking For Richard came out of my head. It's not one where we sat down and said, 'Now, let's do this. I'll direct it; I'll cast these people.' It was always, at its heart, an experiment. It was always something I was just playing with.

"The main virtue in that is that it allows you to be freer in a strange way. You're off the hook. You're just going for the archive. You're not pressured into making a movie that has to communicate. You're trying to figure out what you're trying to say. That's the style — and luckily it became something."

Pacino feels he might have gone even further. "I wanted real life and the play to absolutely merge, so that you couldn't even tell them apart any more. For example, you take the guy who plays Hastings, Kevin Conway. You know where he lives, how he speaks on the phone, his agent, where he gets his newspaper, where he has his coffee. You get to know him a little bit, and then you kill him! The audience gets a sense that is more visceral, you know?"

The film has come at the right time. As William Shakespeare's Romeo And Juliet has shown, the Bard can be good box-office these days. "Kenneth Branagh was a real boost," says Pacino. "He did Henry V and it exploded. He gave the sense that Shakespeare could be popular." Pacino makes Richard III comprehensible to all. Renowned actors (Vanessa Redgrave, Alec Baldwin, Winona Ryder, Kevin Spacey, Estelle Parsons) and odd-ball Oxford scholars deconstruct the language, sum up Richard's motivation and provide a context for the play's myriad names.



Tricky Dicky . . . Pacino as Richard III

"Audiences get lost in Shakespeare, especially the historical plays," Pacino says. "They can't figure out what's going on and why this person is doing this to that person. I thought, if I could just make a path through some of that stuff, it would make it easier for them to experience the scene."

A gum-chewing, nicotine-less Honeyrose-smoking Pacino turned up in a tux, raw silk shirt and stylish boots — all black — at a party on the yacht Midsummer at last May's Cannes Film Festival, where the film appeared in the official Un Certain Regard section. The relaxed-chic look was a far cry from Pacino's homeboy air in Looking For Richard.

Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Pictures Association of America, sidled up and gladhanded Pacino at Cannes.

"I'm a first-time director," Pacino said, with more than a touch of irony. He then described the play he'd adapted.

"Did you write it, too?" Valenti enquired.

Pacino chuckled. "I only *wish*."

Leap from oranges to a lemon

Adam Mars-Jones

Gut Symmetries
by Jeanette Winterson
Granta 219pp £15.99

THIS new novel from a commendably retiring writer — it is known that she doesn't read reviews of her work — repeats a number of themes from previous books. The deathliness of habit and the everyday, from Art And Lies. Sexual triangles, with a husband both all-powerful and doomed from the start, as in Written On The Body. A city viewed as phantasmagorical, this time New York rather than the Venice of The Passion. The serviceability of a religious upbringing, retained in maturity as a set of symbols and ideas, but given a Jewish twist rather different from the Christian fundamentalism of Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit.

Readerly problems are recapitulated as well as writerly themes. Gut Symmetries has its share of Winterson's manner since Oranges, her tendency towards rhapsodic sermons or sermonising rhapsodies. What is characteristic of her work is not so much a style as a manner, a reflex reaching for infinities whether the subject is the pain of sexual betrayal ("I understand that pain leapfrogs over language and lands in dumb growls beyond time") or the beauty of autumn in Vermont ("The sceptical world knee-deep in yods of falling fire").

The characters in the novel's triangle are Jove and his wife Stella, and Alice, lover first of one and then also of the other. Each has an alternative name: Jove was christened Giovanni, Stella in her Jewish aspect is Sarah and the name on Alice's birth certificate is Alluvia. Jove is a physicist, Stella is a poet and Alice is something in between, an academic who lectures on "Paracelsus and the new physics" among other topics. Novels in the eighties regularly featured glamorous or philosophically suggestive ideas from science in diluted form, and it's hard to see that Winterson is doing anything different. The borrowed physics in most passages conveys more prestige than meaning: "My life seems to be made up of dark matter that pushes out of easy consciousness so that I stop and stumble, unable to pass smoothly as other people do."


Jeanette Winterson: radioactive with self-belief

"Guts" in scientific discourse are Grand Unified Theories, and it may be that the characters in the triangle are supposed to represent the three forces that must be reconciled in such a model, "weak force, strong force, electromagnetic force". It's certainly true that Jove, Stella and Alice are at least as much like principles of physics as they are like vivid characters, but that isn't exactly a compliment.

Another vogue of the eighties, magic realism, leaves its mark on the plot and point of view. Each of the female characters describes the bizarre circumstances of her birth — Stella's on a sled drawn by huskies during a freeze in New York, Alice's on a tug in the Mersey — without feeling the need to explain how they come to know so much about their beginnings. Alice knows what her father said at the moment of begetting her, and what he was thinking when he had the stroke that paralysed him for ever.

MIRACLES in real life are elevating, but in novels they tend to lower the spirits. When Stella's mother, pregnant with her, has a craving to eat diamonds, when she snatches and swallows large numbers of them from her husband's associates, when one is mystically absorbed by the foetus, so that Stella is born with a diamond embedded in her spine, and is followed all her life by a man sworn to retrieve it after her death — with each ramification of marvellousness the reader is likely to feel a little more resistant.

Gut Symmetries promises a drama and a resolution, but by the end of the book the storytelling element has all but evaporated and it would be indulgent to describe the plotting as ramshackle. After her father's death, Alice takes his place as her mother's companion on a QE2 cruise that was part of his retirement package. Learning that Jove and Stella have disappeared off Capri, she asks the captain to send her off in one of the launches to search for them: "It was an absurd request and he agreed." No further mention of the mother, whose plot function, perhaps, has been fulfilled. No farewell from daughter, or writer either. By this stage of the book Winterson seems hypnotised by her own performance, radioactive with self-belief, as Quentin Crisp described Joan Crawford.

Gut Symmetries is composed for most of its length by the two women's monologues, briefly supplemented towards the end by Jove's. In theory Alice and Stella are women of different generations, and nationalities, but in practice it is hard to tell their voices apart.

As with the complementary monologues of The Passion, the surprise is not that there is convergence, but that there was ever supposed to be contrast. Jove, when he pipes up near the end of the book, repeats incantatory phrases from the other monologues, such as "stardust that you are". The opposition between the poet and the two physicists, never great, dwindles to nothing when it turns out that Stella's Kabbalist father, in Austria before the war, had corresponded with scientists working on quantum theory.

All novelists traffic in the uncertainty principle, but some are more uncertain than others. When at the exact mid-point of the book Stella and Alice meet as antagonists, the abruptness with which they develop first rapport and then erotic intimacy makes Iris Murdoch seem like the grittiest of realists. But then Murdoch in her writing about emotion is a realistic unrealist, heightening so as to reveal essences, whereas Winterson is an unrealistic unrealist seeking to create wisdom literature, transformational prose with designs beyond the secular.

If you would like to order a copy of Gut Symmetries at the special discount price of £11.99 contact Books@The Guardian Weekly

Private agonies in the Indian ocean

David Rose

When Memory Dies
by A Sivanandan
Arcadia 411pp £9.99

SRI LANKA doesn't get into the news much these days. Western newspaper readers will be hazily aware that the Tamil Tigers are still fighting the Colombo government for an independent homeland. But since the late Eighties, when ultra-nationalist Sinhalese insurrection in the south and the Tamil campaign in the north brought the state close to collapse, the global media caravan has moved on. The myriad agonies of the pearl of the Indian Ocean are private once again.

Sri Lanka has had, until now, virtually no semblance of a literature through which its historic tragedy might resonate and find articulation. But it is far from unique in this: the same applies to most of the complex, bitter conflicts of the Third World. Lacking their Tolstoy, their Zola, even their Thomas Keneally, their horror becomes remote, as analysis and human sympathy are replaced by the superficial voyeurism of the video clip or the newspaper "colour writer".

The unspoken decrees of Western literary fashion exacerbate this phenomenon. To be sure, there is an acknowledged market for realist fiction about the Third World — so long as it is *magic* realism, that bizarre label that has become a contradiction in terms. It's fine to describe coups, revolutions, state oppression and vast human suffering, but the author must remember to keep the location vague, the villains archetypal: to reserve an important role for the local shaman or witchdoctor, and to resolve the plot by a well-timed miracle.

All of these are reasons why When Memory Dies is such an important book. In an age that prefers allusion to substance and meaning, it confronts the mushy shibboleths of literary postmodernism and sweeps them aside. It is an unashamedly realist novel in the old sense of the word: in telling the story of three generations of a Sri Lankan family, it also tells the story of the island and its people in the twentieth century. It thus makes them real, as the dramas of Ceylon's bloody pageant impose themselves on the characters' lives.

So: no shamans, certainly no miracles, no experiments with narrative form. Instead, here are older virtues. Time and place are exquisitely evoked, as the narrative moves from the arid flatlands of the Jaffna peninsula, through the lushness of colonial Colombo, to the lurking terror of hill country pogroms.

The book is divided into three parts, each dominated by a single character: Sahadavan, the idealist, educated son of a poor Tamil farmer who strives to do the right thing during the anti-colonial struggles of the twenties; his son, Rajan, who learns to his tragic cost the impossibility of standing against the tide of post-independence communalism; and Rajan's adopted son Vijay, a soul lost amid the ethnic polarisation of the eighties — Sinhalese by blood, Tamil by affections and destiny. Through their lives and those of their extended family, a gripping, terrible portrait of an entire society emerges.

Yet it is no crude polemic. As director of the Institute of Race Relations in London and the editor of its journal, Race And Class, for nearly 30 years, Ambalvaner Sivanandan has time and again demonstrated a prescience, originality and subtlety that have long been all too rare on the intellectual left. Two of the recurrent themes of his political writing find an echo in the novel. The first is a hatred for what he has termed "skin politics", the reductionist approach common to some black writers that blames everything wrong on imperialism, or white people in general; that emphasises separateness and ethnic difference; that is, in short, the mirror image of old South African apartheid. The second flows from the first; a passionate belief in free will: in the ability of people and communities to change their destinies, irrespective of economic forces and historical legacies; to better their lot — or to ruin it.

In Sri Lanka, the flagrant irresponsibility of the political leadership over many decades has had the latter consequence. The first and most important memory this novel attempts to restore is that Sinhalese and Tamil were once, well within the present century, "one people". The British Empire, which tended to employ Tamils to run the lives of the Sinhalese majority, created the potential for ethnic conflict; as in India, it consciously adopted a doctrine of "divide and rule". But instead of minimising this potential, Ceylon's politicians consciously exploited it, seeking power through constantly outbidding each other in an auction of racial hatred.

The novel vividly conveys the effect of this manipulative process upon ordinary people, as Vijay's wife, Manel, a teacher, begins to teach and finally to believe textbooks that depict Tamils as subhuman. In despair, Vijay travels to Sandilipay, his adoptive father's ancestral village on the Jaffna peninsula. "When memory dies, a people dies," aged Para tells him. "But what if we make up false memories?" Vijay asks. "That is worse," the old man replies. "That is murder." So events in Sri Lanka have proved.

Quietly, without resorting to didacticism, the book conveys a sense of how much has been lost in this dismal process. Ceylon on the eve of independence was a society in which it was reasonable to expect illiteracy might soon be wiped out, where education and tolerance were dominant values. It has never faced the population crisis of the neighbouring subcontinental states, and its soil brims with abundance. Sivanandan himself exemplifies an older generation whose commitment to social justice went hand in hand with a humbling openness of mind. The squandering of this legacy is a crime that cannot be forgiven.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

Italy: The Unfinished Revolution, by Matt Frei (Mandarin, £7.99)

WE LIKE to think we know about Italians: comically corrupt, yet laid-back. Frei, though, who was the Beeb's man in "Southern Europe" for years, knows whereof he speaks, and this run-through of Italian society will shake up as many received ideas as confirm them. He is particularly good at explaining corruption scandals. VIP now means *visti in prigione*, or "seen in prison". Luciano Benetton (you know, the jumper magnate and conscience of the world), presiding over a business run just about entirely by his immediate relations, tells Frei: "There is nothing incestuous about our company. We are a typical Italian family business." Later, Frei cites the testimony of Totò Riina, *capo di tutti capi*, convicted murderer of women, judges and policemen, dealer, on a mind-bogglingly massive scale, of drugs and guns: "But Your Honour. Look at me! I'm just a family man."

Wouldn't It Be Nice, by Brian Wilson with Todd Gold (Bloomsbury, £8.99)

NO MORE mendacious or self-serving than other memoirs of their kind; less so, perhaps, although one doesn't envy Todd Gold's position as ghostwriter, having to speak for the man who wrote Good Vibrations, and then went bonkers. (Of course, he can't have been that bonkers if he has managed to tell his story, however much help he had; but then again, the story of him taking his first shower for two years is both comic and hair-raising.) Don't expect great prose, but this is a book that couldn't be dull if it tried.

Journals 1954-1958, by Allen Ginsberg (Penguin, £12.50)

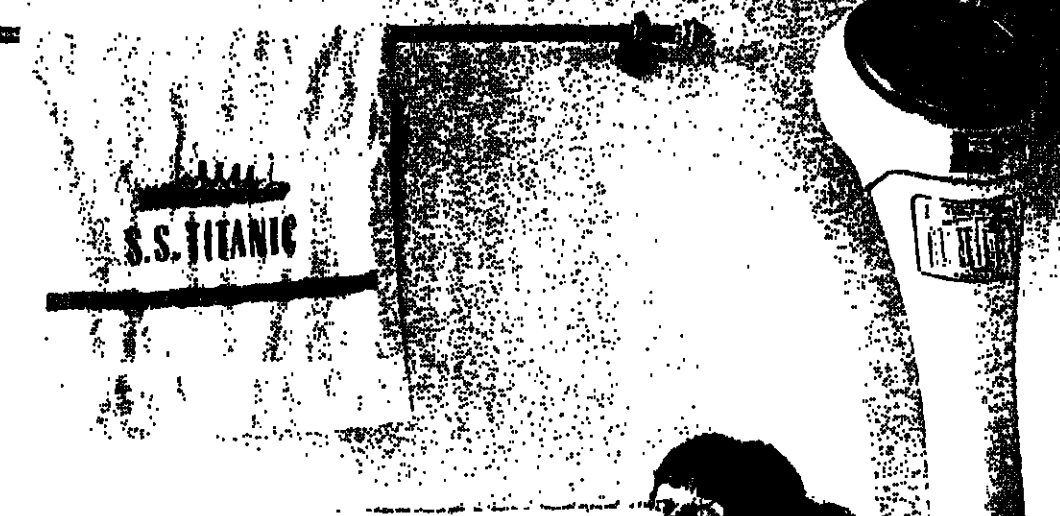
NEARLY 500 pages to cover four years — a bit much, you might have thought. In fact, there is hardly a dull line in here, whether Ginsberg is agonising over his homosexuality, his love for Peter Orlovsky (not necessarily the same thing), arriving in England and coming over all William Blake, or indulging in his great, spiralling rants against greedheads and politicians. "Traumatizers! Perverts! Mayors who rub their cocks with money!" Brilliant.

Slowness, by Milan Kundera (Faber, £5.99)

A NOVELLA, Kundera's first fiction for five years, and the first he has written in French. It defies paraphrase, or makes it hard, being so self-enclosed — a story enfolding at least two other narratives spanning two centuries. Like all Kundera's fiction, it's about sex, literature and the modern condition. You know the drill.

The Weather Prophet, by Lucretia Stewart (Vintage, £6.99)

LUCRETIA STEWART has written a sublime, delicate and moving account of her travels in the Caribbean. Any residual envy you might feel at this most demanding of assignments evaporates when she gets pregnant during the course of the book. I don't think even Paul Theroux could manage that.



Bathing not drowning . . . Critics praised Bainbridge for her wry treatment of the sinking of the Titanic

Bainbridge resurfaces

BERYL BAINBRIDGE has turned the tables on Graham Swift, who beat her in the battle for the 1996 Booker prize, by winning the Whitbread novel award for Every Man For Himself, a typically wry treatment of the sinking of the Titanic, *writes Stephen Moss.*

"When I heard the news, I sang," said Bainbridge. "Success does give you a lift."

Her book will now be a contender for the overall Whitbread Book of the Year. Her rivals are the winners of the Whitbread first novel (John Lanchester for A Debt To Pleasure); biography (Diarmaid MacCulloch for Thomas Cranmer: A Life); and the rather more predictable award for poetry to Seamus Heaney for The Spirit Level.

Screen without sin

Richard Boston

Sin and Censorship: The Catholic Church and the Motion Picture Industry
by Frank Walsh
Yale University Press 394pp £25

WHILE dodging National Service I found myself, at the age of 19, teaching English in Sicily. It was great fun, and a high point of the week was going to the cinema. For me, Giuseppe Tornatore's Cinema Paradiso not only brought back by the bucket-full remembrance of things past, but it also explained some extraordinary jump cuts.

Near the beginning of that film, the village priest is the sole audience in the cinema. At the hint of a screen embrace he rings a bell and the projectionist Alfredo (Philippe Noiret) dutifully marks the reel and later cuts from it the priest-offending frames. As one of the cinema's audience comments, "I've been seeing films for 20 years, and I've never seen a kiss".

At the end of the film, when the old projectionist has died, they find his huge collection of censored screen kisses — Rudolph Valentino, Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, Greta Garbo, Ingrid Bergman and dozens of others in kiss after kiss, excised on the priest's orders and lovingly preserved.

Appropriately, Frank Walsh's entertaining and informative book on sin, cinema, censorship and Catholics starts with Cinema Paradiso, before showing in detail how extensive was the mutilation films were subjected to long before they left America. What the priest did in a Sicilian village was the final stage of a long process. On both sides of the Atlantic there was the same prurient and prudish interference by the Roman Catholic Church. There was also the same collusion by the film industry, and the Hollywood moguls put up not much more resistance to the Catholic Legion of Decency than the projectionist Alfredo did to the village priest.

The censors combined vigilance with diligence. An early case of Catholic outrage was caused by The Kiss (1896). "The spectacle of the prolonged pasturing on each other's lips", magnified on screen "to Gargantuan proportions", was deemed "absolutely disgusting".

With the 1914-18 war there came a panic about venereal diseases. Professor Walsh quotes warnings that "a diseased woman can do more harm than any German fleet of airplanes".

There was an educational film by the American Social Hygiene Association called Fit To Fight. The hero, Billy Hale, starts off by beating up a pacifist. This sturdy behaviour is followed by his refusal to join his chums in a visit to a brothel. His friend Hank is made of weaker stuff and actually kisses (ugh!) a woman. Naturally the result is VD, which means he is not Fit To Fight. The film caused howls of Catholic outrage, since it mentioned things that were unmentionable, but attempts to ban these educational films only boosted the size of audiences eager for sexual titillation.

The Church's meddling was not always so counter-productive. It became ever more powerful, interfering until quite recently not just with finished works but at script stage, with the film-makers colluding in self-censorship to an extent which at this distance looks craven. The Catholics' Production Code and the blacklists of the Legion of Decency were genuine pests, and their attitudes were predominantly racist, anti-Semitic and fascist (Franco and Mussolini being especially admired).

Walsh's pages give numerous examples. In Billy Wilder's Kiss Me Stupid, the Legion of Decency's Father Little objected not only to Kim Novak's cleavage but also to Zelda's comment about her wedding day: "Who ever heard of a groom playing the organ at his own wedding?" Billy Wilder claimed that he saw nothing improper in the line. Father Little insisted that it had a double meaning. He also objected to an exchange between Orville and Polly about the piano teacher's house. "You'll like it," he says. "It's not very big, but it's clean." "What is?" she replies.

Little was also against Dean Martin saying he wanted to go out to the garden to see Zelda's parsley. The priest, without being able quite to put his finger on it, felt certain there was something suggestive about parsley, and told Wilder he was willing to accept the substitution of some other vegetable. As Myles na Gopaleen might have said, the whole thing would be comical if it wasn't tragic, and vice versa.

Merciless Ireland

Seamus Deane

Angela's Ashes
by Frank McCourt
HarperCollins 363pp £16.99

THE second last chapter of this memoir finishes with the question, "Isn't [the USA] a great country altogether?" The last chapter consists of the answer. "'Tis." It scarcely needs saying that the speakers are Irish.

Frank McCourt's memoir has been published to loud acclaim, especially in the US. It recounts the story of his family, starting in New York and thence transferring to Ireland, specifically to Limerick, during the thirties and forties. It is a harrowing tale of extreme poverty, fecklessness, illness, dirt, near-starvation and death. One child dies in New York; the twins die in Limerick. Frank contracts typhoid fever; the father, Malachy, drinks and sings rebel songs, finally disappearing into alcoholism; the mother, the Angela of the title, leads a life of martyrdom, forever pregnant, depressed, hungry, reduced to begging in her heroic attempts to keep her children alive. The Limerick they live in is a city of extreme Catholicism, dominated by a savage church, pubs crowded with heavy-drinking, sexually repressed working-class men and homes ruled by avariciously respectable and desolate women. It is, in brief, De Valera's Ireland, seen from the margins.

The opinions expressed, with great regularity, about the English, Protestants, the North, Ireland's struggle, the Famine, the Catholic religion, are as ignorant and trite as one could wish. Malachy combines alcoholism, fecklessness and a gift for storytelling that is, by now, an almost classical formation for a male of the Irish underclass.

It is in the memoir's strange combination of the remembered with the stereotypical that its appeal and its problems lie. Perhaps too much is remembered; or, more precisely, too much is told over and over again. The filth and stench of unsanitary conditions, the starveling diet, the high incidence of grotesques and eccentrics inhabiting the lanes of Limerick, the endless prejudice of uneducated and prolific opinions about the world in general and the Irish world in particular ultimately have an eroding effect.

In fiction — and all autobiography is fiction, although not all fiction is autobiography — a certain economy with the truth is both necessary and admirable. In this work, there is little such economy. It could have been even more harrowing had it been more compressed. As it stands, it is implacable in its reiterated detail, ultimately stifling the very response it sets out to evoke.

There was, some years ago, a theatrical production of The Diary Of Anne Frank in a small Dublin theatre. The actress playing the central part was so bad that when the Nazi soldiers came in to search the house, the audience shouted to them: "She's hiding up in the attic; go and get her." At times, Angela's Ashes evoked in me a similar response. Not another tirade about the Famine, the English, the Northern accent, Protestants, sex, a brimming chamber-pot, flies, rats, eyes oozing with yellow matter.

There are two elements in this story that in part account for its great appeal. One is its cousinage with all of those stories, fictional and journalistic, that have emerged from the collapse of traditional religious and political authority in Ireland. Every form of abuse — sexual, economic, political — is now dominant in the narratives of the aftermath of an Ireland that has been repudiated with a mixture of grief and venom. The other element is American, and the current American vogue for stories of victimage — and of upbeat recovery from that condition. Frank McCourt's memoir combines these in such a potent manner that it could hardly avoid popularity.

McCourt is certainly a fine writer, but I wonder about his sense of economy. He believes too much in the reliability of memory, as if that were enough in itself.

'Tisnt.

Winter tidings

Paul Evans

A REAL winter barrelled down the northeast wind from the Baltic, sweeping across Europe, rolling through the Shropshire countryside and onward, its wake freezing into a white stillness. Snow in the woods brings a strange quiet to the new year. Grey skies, black trees and white ground change the landscape: snow removes signs and signals of the familiar and replaces them with another, seemingly timeless way of seeing and feeling the world. In an age when we have grown so accustomed to the frenetic pace of life, the stillness of winter woods is something that calls to us from another time and space. As an unknown Irish author from the 9th century wrote: "Cold has seized the birds' wings; season of ice, this is my news."

But not all woodland birds are still. I followed a ridge of oak, holly and yew trees in late afternoon down to a stream and crossed over a fallen mossy ash trunk, as the pale winter sun sank behind a little hill that I'd never noticed before. A narrow badger track led up the steep slope under the darkening trees and opened into a clearing of crumpled, frozen bracken stalks on the top. Suddenly a small sharp voice rang out from the surrounding trees. In the growing dark I could just see that it came from a wren, flitting around in honeysuckle stems on an oak tree. Then there were two, then three, then more. All around the summit of this wooded hill, the cries of wrens sparked like the striking of flints, like stones skimming over a frozen pond.

The tiny brown wren, *Troglodytes troglodytes*, gets its Latin name from "cave dweller", perhaps an allusion to its domed, hollow nests but perhaps also from the dark space that has wrapped the bird in myth through the ages. It's been a long time since the wren appeared on the back of farthing coins but they are still popular images of decoration in pictures, house name-plates and china ornaments.

In Celtic poetry, wrens are often referred to as "combative" or "valiant", tiny yet fierce guardians of their territory. Perhaps because of this there is also a connection in Celtic literature between the robin and the wren, and this relationship survived the turn of the century in these parts through the rhyme: "Cock Robin and Jenny Wren, God Almighty's cock and hen".

As the female counterpart to cock robin, a mythical figure that harks back to fertility spirits, anyone who harms the wren is cursed. The significance of wrens is ancient: despite their modern cuteness, they are ominous, sacred birds. In Celtic mythology, wrens were part of a complicated ornithomancy, they were prognostic, telling of things to come. Which direction the wren flew, which compass position it called from and the place from which it called, contained important messages for those who knew how to read them. It is said that druids kept wrens in cages, or caves to aid in their divinations. To ordinary people, wren sounds and sightings foretold visitors and whether their intentions were good or ill. Wrens brought tidings of treachery, even death.

It's easy to dismiss these superstitions because it has become hard for us to imagine a world where everything in nature has a bearing on everyday life. But there is something wonderfully strange in this gathering of wrens on a dark wooded hilltop. Their voices seem like hammers striking the long deep winter night, beating a story, a pattern of omens into the clear frozen metal of the emerging year. Who knows what this year will bring? Perhaps the wrens do.


ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LARKING

Chess Leonard Barden

NINE grandmasters and a host of masters played in the UK League's recent West Bromwich weekend, where Northumbria, which has been the surprise packet out of the 18 teams so far, drew with the holders, Slough.

Due to the seeded pairings, Slough will avoid meeting the other favourites for the title — the Midlands and Kent — until the closing rounds, so there should be some stiff competition for UK places in yet another attempt at the European Club Cup, in which Britain has such a disastrous record.

In contrast to the league's growing popularity, a telling statistic from the older tradition of county chess is that Middlesex, which has captured the county title a record 28 times, has withdrawn all of its three squads from the current competition because of a shortage of players.

This is not an entirely surprising decision. County and club teams are increasingly bearing the brunt of the recent trend for average players to prefer spending a comfortable evening at home with the latest chess paperback or challenging the computer, rather than venturing out to a cold and draughty venue to pit their wits against real human opponents.

**IM Simon Ansell
v GM Daniel King**

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Designed to prise the GM from his widely praised book on the Najdorf variation (3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 a6), but bad psychology. King was analysing 3 Bb5+ with Nigel Short when they were pre-teenagers.

Bd7 Nc6 is out of fashion, but Kasparov chose Nd7 in the Olympiad. **4 Bxd7+ Nxd7 5 0-0 Ngf6 6 Qe2 Rc8!? 7 b3?!** Black feinted at 7 c3 c4 8 Na3 Nb6 8 b3 Qc7 9 e5 with complex play. White allows himself to be impressed, and his b2 bishop bites against a granite wall of black pawns.

g6 8 Bb2 Bg7 9 c4 e5! Stops 10 d4 and prepares a knight invasion at d4 or f4.

10 Nc3 Nf8 11 Ne1? Passive mode rarely works. White should try 11 Nd5 Ne6 12 g3.

Ne6 12 g3 Nd4 13 Qd3 Qd7 14 Ng2 0-0 15 f3 Qh3! The overture to a king's-side attack, taking advantage of White's misplaced pieces at b2 and g2.

16 Rf2 h5 17 Raf1 Kh8 18 Ne3 h4 19 Rg2 Nh7 20 f4 f5 21 Ncd5 Rce8 22 fxe5 dxe5 23 Bxd4 cxd4 24 Nd1 Ng5 25 Nf2 fxe4 26 Nxe4 Rxf1+ 27 Kxf1 Qf5+ 28 Nf2 White has survived the immediate threats, but is now squashed by Black's bunch of Nimzovitchian "lust to expand" advancing pawns and their supporting pieces.

e4 29 Qe2 h3 30 Rg1 e3 31 Nf4 Kh7 32 dxe3 Rxe3 33 Qg4 Nf3! 34 Qxh3+ Qxh3 35 N2xh3 d3 36 Kf2 Bd4! Even better than Nxg1. **37 Rf1 Re1+ 38 Resigns** Impressive play by the TV chess commentator.

No 2455

White to move and win. A lone king draws against king, bishop and the a or h pawn if the bishop does not control, and the defender can reach, the pawn's queening square. So how do you stop the BK sprinting back to h8, eating your f4 pawn en route?

No 2454: 1 Qc5. If Kg7 2 Qh5 Kf6 (Kf8 3 Qf7) 3 Qg5. If Kg6 2 Qf8 Kh7 3 Bb1.

Quick crossword no. 349

Across

1 In an unscrupulous way (5,3,4)
9 Silly (5)
10 Block a passage (7)
11 Loathe (4)
12 Alcoholic appetiser (8)
14 Naked (6)
15 Make colourless (6)
18 Dislike (8)
20 Cab — to move to the runway (4)
22 Make use of (7)
23 Come to — stretch (5)
24 Highest score on dartboard (6,6)

Down

2 Stretchy (7)
3 Cattle (4)
4 Company of actors (6)
5 Surround (8)
6 Burst (5)
7 When to remove Christmas decorations! (7,5)
8 Certainly (7,5)
13 Sumptuous (8)
16 Unyielding (7)
17 Thoroughfare — somewhere in Somerset (6)
19 Pigs (5)
21 Correct — loyal (4)

Last week's solution

Bridge Zia Mahmood

I'M OFTEN asked if psychic bids are legal, and whether I approve of them. So often, in fact, that I answered the question in my latest book, Ask Zia. But for those whose families were inconsiderate enough not to buy them the book for Christmas, here's my answer. A "psychic" bid, or "psyche", is the closest you can get in bridge to the out-and-out bluff in poker. When you make a psychic bid, you are seriously misrepresenting your hand to the whole table in the hope that your opponents will be fooled and your partner won't be — or, if he is, that it will not matter. Don't confuse the psyche with a bid that's just a little short on values — if you open 1♠ with this:

♠A 10 9 6 3 ♥K 7 5 4 ♦Q 3 2 ♣4

then you are opening light for sure, but you're not psyching. If you open 1♠ with this, though:

♠6 5 4 ♥J 9 8 7 3 2 ♦8 7 2 ♣4

then that is a psyche!

Why would anyone do a crazy *thing like that? Well,* suppose you held the hand above in a rubber bridge game. You're not vulnerable — how could you be when you haven't had a card all night? Your opponents are vulnerable, though.

Partner passes, your right-hand opponent passes and the slurping *sound that you can hear is your left-*hand opponent licking his lips. No wonder — he's got a bigger hand than King Kong's, and if you don't do something desperate, then he and his partner are going to bid at least a game, and probably a slam. You could open three hearts, hoping to deprive them of bidding space, but probably they'll brush that aside easily enough. What else is there?

When this hand occurred, South confidently opened 1♠! This was *how the bidding* proceeded:

South	West	North	East
		Pass	Pass
1♠	D'ble	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

The full hand is shown at the top of the next column. South led his fourth-highest heart, and the defenders cashed the first six tricks to defeat 3NT by two when East-West could make an easy six spades!

Not all psychic bids meet with such success. Those who are fond of the ploy will argue that the odds are in their favour. "After all," they'll tell you, "I have two opponents who can be fooled and only one partner." What they forget is that opponents are under no obligation to trust them, whereas there is no surer recipe for disaster than to have a partner who does not trust you.

	North	
	♠ 8 7	
	♥ A K 10 6	
	♦ 10 5 3	
	♣ J 9 7 4	
West		**East**
♠ A K 10 9		♠ Q J 3 2
♥ Q 5		♥ 4
♦ A K J		♦ Q 9 6 4
♣ A Q 3 2		♣ K 10 8 6
	South	
	♠ 6 5 4	
	♥ J 9 8 7 3 2	
	♦ 8 7 2	
	♣ 5	

The vast majority of psychic bids make no difference at all to the outcome of a deal, while many more end in a bad result for the operators. The psychic bid is a last-chance weapon, to be employed only when you really have your back to the wall. But there is no greater satisfaction, in any game, than that which comes from a bold and barefaced swindle. ©

Football Premiership: Aston Villa 2 Newcastle United 2

Keegan leaves no case for defence

David Lacey

THE resignation of Kevin Keegan as manager of Newcastle United last week sparked a plethora of explanations; some plausible, others not so, as to why he had left St James' Park. They ranged from a falling-out with club chairman, Sir John Hall, to ill health, and disaffection among the players.

Yet Newcastle's performance at Villa Park last Saturday suggested that Keegan's only statement on the matter, that he felt he had taken the team as far as he could, was still the most logical explanation. Unless, that is, he feared the team would soon take him round the bend.

For all the hype that surrounded the game, a profusion of television cameras, microphones and notebooks, and even more emotional Toon support than usual, it turned out to be a thoroughly normal Newcastle day. A two-goal lead was squandered, and, if Dwight Yorke's finishing had been as incisive as it was at St James' Park in September, when his hat-trick had enabled Aston Villa to run Keegan's side mighty close at 4-3 after the visitors had had Draper sent off, the caretakership of Terry McDermott would surely have begun with a defeat.

Two moments epitomised the contradictions of Keegan's Newcastle — the beautifully weighted pass from Beardsley that found Shearer shaking off Staunton to score the opening goal just past the quarter-hour, and the catastrophic ball that Peacock decided to play across his own half shortly after Villa had drawn level at 2-2.

As Hislop tore beyond his penalty area and collided with Albert, Yorke lobbed the ball towards, but wide of, the empty net. Five minutes later, Albert having brought down Milosevic, Yorke wasted the penalty by placing his kick too close to the goalkeeper, Hislop making a better save to deny the Villa striker a goal from the rebound.

Another two minutes and Staunton had sent Yorke through a square defence. But again the chance was missed, whereupon Yorke departed with a thigh strain, along with Aston Villa's principal hope of victory.

The nature of Newcastle's second goal — a sharp piece of opportunism by Clark, who found the net from 30 yards after Bosnich, losing his footing, had sent a clearance straight to him — left Villa subdued for a while, but hope was restored seven minutes before half-time when Yorke turned in a low, deflected centre from Wright.

Seven minutes into the second half, Yorke's backheel sent in Staunton for a shot that Hislop could only push into the path of Milosevic, who brought the scores level. Villa will be disappointed at failing to force a victory that appeared to be theirs for the taking, Newcastle more than a little relieved that a disturbing week did not end in defeat.

Whoever takes over at St James' Park the problems at the back, which in the end proved too much for Keegan, will have to be solved. The tutelage of coach Mark Lawrenson is still available but Newcastle's defence remains overburdened with nuts and short on bolts.

Just champion . . . Damon Hill shows off the TWR Arrows-Yamaha A18 in which he will defend his F1 world title, at the International Racing Car Show in Birmingham PHOTOGRAPH: MIKE COOPER

Sunderland 1 Arsenal 0

Bergkamp red card catches the mood

Michael Walker

JOHN HARTSON, it had to be. On the far side of the pitch the yellow-shirted Arsenal player felling an opponent just had to be Hartson although in the encroaching gloom at Roker Park it was difficult to tell exactly who the perpetrator was.

In fact, the man disappearing down the tunnel after the incident which left stud marks in Paul Bracewell's knee was not Hartson, but Dennis Bergkamp. Yes, the angelic Bergkamp. He stood aghast as Michael Riley produced a red card for the first time in the Dutch striker's career. But it was a fair decision, even though Bergkamp expressed surprise.

At least that is what Arsène Wenger claimed. "Not a man of many fouls" was the Arsenal manager's reasonably accurate description of Bergkamp, although at present it is not a phrase that could describe his team as a whole. Last Saturday Arsenal were a side of many fouls, and even Bergkamp caught the mood. Most were unnecessary, too. Particularly at the back, Arsenal's defenders were like nightclub bouncers alongside Sunderland's teenage ravers, Bridges and Mullin.

Yet from the fifth minute, when Platt clattered into the eminently breakable matchstick legs of Bridges, it seemed Arsenal were set on getting physical. Platt was quite properly booked and, in chronological order, so were Hartson, Keown, Adams and Winterburn.

Sunderland's Gray and Kelly joined them in Mr Riley's notebook, and it should have been worse. Less than 10 minutes after Bergkamp skulked away, Hartson, already booked for kicking another lump off Bridges, committed the worst foul of the afternoon on Ord. Although it happened under Mr Riley's nose, he waved play on.

As Arsenal have had five players sent off in 10 games, you would have thought the Londoners had learned something of self-restraint by now, particularly since such indiscretions are costing them dear.

Had Ian Wright being playing, it is not difficult to imagine an Arsenal victory that would have taken them to the top of the Premiership. After all, Sunderland, with only 22 goals in 22 league games, are hardly prolific. It would still have been 21 but for Tony Adams's comical own-goal in the 66th minute, the only occasion when Seaman was significantly involved.

If Sunderland's lack of firepower bothered Reid, he was not telling. "It wasn't the greatest football match for the purist," he said. "But it's a smashing result for us."

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP Aston Villa 2 Newcastle 2; Blackburn 4, Coventry 0; Leeds 3, Leicester 0, Liverpool 0, West Ham 0, Middlesbrough 0, Southampton 1, Nottingham Forest 2, Chelsea 0, Sheffield Wed 2, Everton 1, Sunderland 1, Arsenal 0; Tottenham 1, Man Utd 2; Wimbledon 1, Derby County 1. **Leading positions:** 1, Liverpool (played 23-points 43). 2, Man Utd (22-41); 3, Arsenal (22-40).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE First Division Bradford 2, Oxford 0; Grimsby 1, Port Vale 1, Ipswich P, Sheffield Utd P; Man City 1, Crystal Palace 1; Oldham P, Huddersfield P; Portsmouth 0, Bolton 3; QPR 3, Barnsley 1; Reading 2, Charlton 2; Southend P, Norwich P; Wolves 2, West Brom 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Bolton (28-55); 2, Barnsley (26-47); 3, Sheffield Utd (26-46).

Second Division Blackpool P, Luton P; Bournemouth 1, Rotherham 1; Bristol City 2, Burnley 1; Bury P, Walsall P; Chesterfield 1, Bristol Rovers 0, Gillingham P, Stockport P, Millwall 3, Preston 2, Plymouth 1, Crewe 0; Watford P, Shrewsbury P; Wrexham 3, Notts County 3, Wycombe 2, Peterborough 0 abandoned; York 2, Brentford 4. **Leading positions:** 1, Brentford (26-50); 2, Luton (24-46); 3, Millwall (26-44).

Third Division Barnet P, Scunthorpe P; Brighton P, Northampton P; Cambridge P, Exeter P; Cardiff 1, Lincoln 3; Carlisle P, Torquay P; Chester 0, Hartlepool 0, Doncaster 0, Colchester 0; Fulham 0, Darlington 0; Hereford 0, Mansfield 1, Hull 1, Swansea 1, Leyton Orient P, Rochdale P, Wigan P, Scarborough P. **Leading positions:** 1, Fulham (25-56); 2, Carlisle (26-52); 3, Cambridge Utd (25-47).

TENNENTS SCOTTISH CUP Second round East Stirling 4, Brora Rangers 3. Ross County P, Montrose P, Stranraer P, Inverness P; Spartans 0, Arbroath 0; Whitehill 2, Queen of the South 3.

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE Premier Division Dunfermline 1, Dundee Utd 3; Hearts 1, Celtic 2; Kilmarnock 0, Raith 1; Motherwell 2, Hibernian 1; Rangers 4, Aberdeen 0. **Leading positions:** 1, Rangers (22-56); 2, Celtic (21-45); 3, Dundee Utd (23-36).

First Division Clydebank P, St Mirren P; Dundee 2, Airdrie 1; Morton 2, East Fife 0, Stirling Albion 0, Falkirk 0. **Leading positions:** 1, St Johnston (20-44); 2, Dundee (22-37); 3, Airdrie (22-40).

Second Division Berwick 0, Dumbarton 3; Brechin P, Hamilton P; Stenhousemuir 1, Livingston 3. **Leading positions:** 1, Livingston (20-44); 2, Ayr (18-38); 3, Hamilton (17-34).

Third Division Albion P, Alloa P; Forfar 2, Queens Park 2. **Leading positions:** 1, Inverness (18-35); 2, Ross County (19-30); 3, Montrose (20-30).

Sports Diary Mike Kiely

Green light for Ashton

ENGLAND'S preparations for the Five Nations Championship, which begins this weekend, received a setback when former Bath coach Brian Ashton shunned the advances of Jack Rowell, and instead plumped for the post of Ireland coach for the duration of the championship. The Irish Rugby Football Union moved quickly following the resignation of Murray Kidd, only 24 hours after 49-year-old Ashton had left the Courage League side. He said: "I have always been a patriotic Lancastrian and Englishman, so it will be odd to coach a team with the aim of beating England. But for the period of the Five Nations I will be *as green as any* Irishman." Ashton's first international side takes the field against France at Lansdowne Road this weekend, while Scotland face Wales at Murrayfield. England's first Five Nations tie comes a week later with Scotland's visit to Twickenham.

THE Football Association gave the clearest indication yet that the short term goals of the Premiership are not compatible with the game's long term health when it appointed Howard Wilkinson as its first technical director. Wilkinson, who exited his post at Leeds United four months ago, was handed a four-year contract to, in the words of the FA chairman Keith Wiseman, "direct the production of a structure in England that will raise playing standards in our young players to world-class level."

A major contributing factor in Wilkinson being put to the sword at Leeds was his team's awful performance in the defeat by Aston Villa in last season's Coca-Cola Cup final. This year's semi-final line-up began to take shape after Wimbledon defeated Bolton Wanderers 2-0 at Burnden Park, and Middlesbrough beat Liverpool at the Riverside Stadium, 2-1.

The Teesside club will face a semi-final against either Southampton or Stockport County, while Wimbledon will take on either Ipswich Town or Leicester City for a place in the Wembley showpiece.


Millar . . . rising star

CYCLING'S Continental élite have been battling it out for the signature of 19-year-old Briton David Millar (left). As well as Miguel Indurain's old team, Banesto, GAN and Casino were interested in acquiring his services, but it was the Cofidis team that finally won the day.

IN NASHVILLE, Britain's Henry Akinwande saw off the challenge of his fellow countryman Scott Welch to retain his WBO Heavyweight title. After the fight, Akinwande was less than generous in his description of his opponent: "Welch said he was fighting for England but I think he was a disgrace to the country. You could see he didn't want to fight."

SUPER BOWL XXXI will be contested by the New England Patriots and the Green Bay Packers. In the American Football Conference play-off, the Patriots secured a ticket to New Orleans on January 26 after defeating Jacksonville Jaguars 20-6. In the National Football Conference, Green Bay Packers saw off the challenge by Carolina Panthers 30-13, to ensure a Super Bowl appearance for the first time in 30 years.

FOOTBALL responded to concern over the onward march of merchandising when the new England strip was unveiled. For the first time, kits will incorporate a sell-by date so that consumers know when they will be phased out. The move follows protests by consumer groups and parents that they were paying high prices for items that quickly became outmoded.

Shiv Sharma is on holiday